

LYSISTRATA

Speaking Characters

LYSISTRATA: leader of the Athenian wives

KALONIKE: a young Athenian wife

MYRRHINE: likewise

LAMPITO: a Spartan wife

COMMISSIONER: member of the Commission of Ten

KINESIAS: Athenian citizen, husband of MYRRHINE

HERALD: Spartan messenger

SPARTAN: spokesman of the Spartan ENVOYS who come to sue for peace

ATHENIAN: leader of the Athenian ENVOYS

OLD MEN: half-chorus of 12

WOMEN: half-chorus of 12

CHORUS: incorporating the two half-choruses (from 1043 onwards)

LEADER^M: of OLD MEN's half-chorus

LEADER^W: of WOMEN's half-chorus

LEADER: of combined CHORUS

(There are also several small parts for individual unnamed women.)

Silent Characters

BOIOTIAN WOMAN

KORINTHIAN WOMAN

SLAVE-GIRL: LYSISTRATA'S

ARCHERS: slaves attending the COMMISSIONER

BABY: child of KINESIAS and MYRRHINE

RECONCILIATION: naked female personification of peace

ENVOYS: official representatives of both Athens and Sparta

SLAVES (various)

[Early morning. The scene is an Athenian street, in the vicinity of the Akropolis; there is at least one door in the background. LYSISTRATA, accompanied by a SLAVE-GIRL, enters and paces up and down with growing impatience.]

LYSISTRATA [exasperated]. Now, if they'd been invited to a Bacchic rite,
Or a grotto of Pan's, or Aphrodite's shrine,
You wouldn't be able to move for their tambourines!*

As it is, not a single woman has shown up yet. [A door opens.]
Oh—my neighbour Kalonike's coming out.
Kalonike, greetings!

KALONIKE. You too, Lysistrata.
What's agitating you? Don't frown, my dear.
Those arching eyebrows just don't suit your face.*

LYSISTRATA [gravely]. Kalonike, I feel a burning pain at heart—
A sense of bitter grievance for us women. 10
Among the men we've gained a reputation
For being fond of schemes—

KALONIKE. And so we are!*

LYSISTRATA. Yet when they're told to gather for this meeting,
To come and discuss a matter of such importance,
They stay in bed—no sign of them!

KALONIKE. Look, darling,
They'll come. It's hard for women to leave the house.*
I dare say some are getting their husbands—up,
Or waking the slaves, or putting a baby to sleep,
Or maybe washing and feeding their little ones.

LYSISTRATA. There are *other* things that ought to matter far more. 20

KALONIKE. But what's the reason, dear Lysistrata,
Which makes you ask us women to meet together?
What kind of thing? What scale?

LYSISTRATA. It's big.

KALONIKE [suggestively]. And beefy?

LYSISTRATA. It's beefy, all right.

KALONIKE. It sounds worth coming for!

LYSISTRATA. It's not like *that*, or else they'd all be here.

It's something I myself have pondered hard
And tossed around through many sleepless nights.

KALONIKE. And is this thing you've 'tossed'—well, *delicate*?

LYSISTRATA. So delicate that Greece's whole salvation
Depends entirely on the female sex.

KALONIKE. The female sex? Well, what a slender hope!

LYSISTRATA. It's up to *us* to run the city's affairs.

If we don't, there won't be any Spartans left—

KALONIKE. No Spartans left? How simply wonderful!

LYSISTRATA. And every single Boiotian will be wiped out—

KALONIKE. No, please just spare a few—of their *eels*, that is.*

LYSISTRATA. And as for Athens, my tongue can't bring itself

To say the worst. You grasp my implication.

But if the women attend the meeting here—

Boiotian and Spartan women as well as ours—

40

We'll launch a common effort to rescue Greece.

KALONIKE [*sententiously*]. 'What clever, illustrious deed could
women achieve?'

[*Normal voice*] We spend our idle lives at home, dolled up
And draped in chiffon dresses, or prettified
In slinky gowns and ritzy evening shoes.

LYSISTRATA. It's *just* these things that could save the situation:

Little chiffon numbers, perfumes, ritzy shoes,
And all that rouge and see-through lingerie.

KALONIKE. But what could they do?

LYSISTRATA. They might prevent the men

From threatening one another with their spears—

50

KALONIKE. For *that* I'll have my chiffon dress re-dyed!

LYSISTRATA. Or waving shields—

KALONIKE. Straight on with that slinky
gown!

LYSISTRATA. Or swords.

KALONIKE. I'll fetch some ritzy evening shoes!

LYSISTRATA. Well, shouldn't the rest of the women be here by
now?

KALONIKE. They should have simply *flocked* here long ago.

LYSISTRATA. But, dear, you'll see the women from Attika

Do everything too late; it's always the same.

Not a single woman has come from the coastal region,

And no one's here from Salamis yet.

KALONIKE. I bet

That *they* were up at dawn for an early ride!*

60

LYSISTRATA. And as for those I felt quite confident

Would be here first—the women from Acharnai—*

They haven't come.

KALONIKE. I know Theogenes' wife
 Was bracing herself with a drink before she left.*
 Oh look! Here *are* some women approaching now.
 [Women start to appear from both side entrances, among them MYRRHINE.]

LYSISTRATA. And here's another group over here.

KALONIKE. Good heavens,
 What deme are they from?

LYSISTRATA. Anagyrus.

KALONIKE [sniffing]. Yes, I see:
 No wonder, then, they're raising such a stink.*

MYRRHINE. I hope we're not too late, Lysistrata?
 Well, what? No answer? 70

LYSISTRATA. You've let me down, Myrrhine,
 Turning up so late for such important business.

MYRRHINE. I'm sorry, I had to find my bra in the dark.
 But now we're here, explain, if it's really urgent.

LYSISTRATA. Not yet: we ought to wait a little longer
 Until the Boiotian and Spartan wives have time
 To get here too.

MYRRHINE. Quite right: I'm sure we should.
 But here, in fact, comes Lampito right now.
 [Enter, from a side entrance, LAMPITO, a muscular beauty, with two other
 young wives, all three wearing short, revealing dresses. The new arrivals
 immediately become the object of close physical attention.]

LYSISTRATA. Warm greetings, Lampito, dear Spartan friend.
 Sweetheart, you're looking simply ravishing.*
 What gorgeous skin—and, oh, those *muscles* of yours. 80
 You could throttle a bull!

LAMPITO. By the Twins,* I swear I could.
 My exercise includes rump-stretching kicks.

KALONIKE. I've *never* seen a finer pair of breasts.

LAMPITO. Stop feeling my flesh: I'm not for sacrifice!

LYSISTRATA. And what about this other girl—who's she?

LAMPITO. A Boiotian—and a fine one, by the Twins.
 She's come for the meeting too.

MYRRHINE [examining her]. A true Boiotian!
 Her belly's as flat as any Boiotian plain.

KALONIKE [peering]. And look at her little bush, how cutely
 trimmed!*

LYSISTRATA. This other girl? 90

LAMPITO. A choice piece, by the Twins.

Korinthian, what's more.

KALONIKE. A real 'choice piece'!*

That's all too clear in front as well as behind.

LAMPITO. Now, who's the one who's summoned this gathering
Of all us women?

LYSISTRATA. It's me.

LAMPITO. I'd like to hear

What it is you want.

KALONIKE. Yes, tell us now, dear friend.

Explain this grand idea that's on your mind.

LYSISTRATA. I'll tell you, then. But first I'll ask a question.

It's something small I need to know.

KALONIKE. Feel free.

LYSISTRATA. Don't you ever miss the fathers of your children

When they're off on active service? I certainly know 100

You've all got husbands away from home like this.

KALONIKE. You're right, my dear. My husband's been in Thrace

The last five months: he's guarding—Eukrates.*

MYRRHINE. And *mine's* been gone for seven whole months, at
Pylos.

LAMPITO. While *mine*, even when he comes home, has hardly
time

To hang up his shield before he flies off again.

LYSISTRATA. Not a glimmer of males—not a single adulterer
left!

And since Miletos ditched our old alliance,

I haven't set eyes on a single five-inch dildo

Which might at least have given synthetic relief.* 110

So, are you ready, if I devise a scheme,

To help me end the war?

KALONIKE. By the two goddesses!*

I'd even be prepared to pawn this dress

To raise the funds for celebratory drinks!

MYRRHINE [*frivolously*]. And *I'd* be willing to cut myself in half

And serve myself as a sacrificial flat-fish!

LAMPITO. And *I* would climb up mount Taygetos

To gaze upon a land of peace below.

LYSISTRATA. I'll tell you then; no need for secrecy.

I assure you, assembled women: to have a chance
Of ever compelling our husbands to live in peace,
We really must— 120

KALONIKE. Do what?

LYSISTRATA. Well, *will* you do it?

KALONIKE. We promise we will, if death itself's the price!

LYSISTRATA. We *must* give up the pleasure of—the prick.

[*Women shudder and start to leave.*]

What makes you turn away? Don't try to leave.

You there, why grimace and shake your heads like that?

[*Melodramatically*] 'What means this pale complexion, these
tears that flow?''*

Well, will you or won't you do it? Please tell me that.

KALONIKE. I simply *couldn't*. The war must take its course.

MYRRHINE. I feel the same. The war must take its course. 130

LYSISTRATA. So that's your view, you 'flat-fish'! Just before

You said you'd even cut yourself in half.

KALONIKE. Ask *anything*, anything else. I'd be prepared

To walk through fire. But not give up the prick!

There's nothing like it, dear Lysistrata.

LYSISTRATA. Well, what about *you*?

MYRRHINE. I too would walk through fire.

LYSISTRATA. The female sex! Sheer lustfulness, that's us!

No wonder they write such tragedies about us!

Our lives are simply full of sex and intrigue.*

[*Pleadingly*] But you, dear Spartan friend—if only you 140

Would stick with me, we'd save the situation.

Please lend support.

LAMPITO. It's difficult, by the Twins,

For wives to sleep alone without a dick.

And yet we must: we need peace back so badly.

LYSISTRATA. O dearest friend, you're the only genuine *woman*!

KALONIKE. Suppose we really did abstain from *it*,

Though god forbid! What difference would it make

To getting peace?

LYSISTRATA. A difference like no other.

If we were to sit at home, our faces powdered,

And wore short silken shifts to give a glimpse 150

Of nicely trimmed small triangles of hair,*

So our husbands started to swell and wanted to shag,

But we held back and refused to let them do it—
I tell you now: they'd make peace in a flash.

LAMPITO. It's true, when Menelaos caught a glimpse
Of Helen's breasts, it made him drop his sword.*

KALONIKE. But what if our men reject us then, my dear?

LYSISTRATA. To borrow Pherekrates' phrase: try self-abuse!*

KALONIKE. A useless substitute! It's just not real.

And what if they turn quite rough, and drag us upstairs? 160

LYSISTRATA. Then grab the bedroom door and cling for life.

KALONIKE. But what if they beat us up?

LYSISTRATA. Keep on resisting.

They can't derive much pleasure from *forcing* us.*

We've got to make them suffer in every way.

They'll soon give in: no husband can enjoy

A life of constant friction with his wife.

KALONIKE. Well, if you two agree, we'll go along.

LAMPITO. But how will we persuade our Spartan husbands

To keep the peace without duplicitous guile?*

And who could hope to persuade the Athenian rabble 170

To keep its mind fixed on negotiations?*

LYSISTRATA. Don't worry, we'll soon convince our people here.

LAMPITO. Not while their triremes still having rigging intact,

And your goddess's vault contains such limitless funds!*

LYSISTRATA. I've made provisions to cover this very point:

We're going to seize the Akropolis today.

This task has been assigned to older women:

While we talk here, they're going to use the pretext

Of a sacrifice to occupy the hill.

LAMPITO. A perfect ploy—you've thought of everything. 180

LYSISTRATA. In that case, Lampito, let's swear an oath

At once, to make our pact unbreakable.

LAMPITO. Reveal the oath you want us all to swear.

LYSISTRATA. Right, where's my Scythian slave?

[*The SLAVE-GIRL, carrying a shield etc., steps forward.*]

Hey you, look

sharp!

Come here and place the shield there, facing down.

Can someone pass the meat?

KALONIKE [*interrupting*]. Lysistrata,

What oath is this you're going to make us swear?

LYSISTRATA. The sort, I've heard, occurs in Aischylos—
A blood-oath over a shield.*

KALONIKE. Lysistrata!

Don't use a shield to swear an oath for *peace*! 190

LYSISTRATA. What oath, then, would you like?

KALONIKE. Perhaps we ought
To find a pure white horse for sacrifice?*

LYSISTRATA. A pure white horse!

KALONIKE. Well think of something better.

LYSISTRATA. All right, I will; just listen to this suggestion.

Let's place a large black *drinking-cup* down here,

And sacrifice a jar of Thasian wine,

Then swear we won't pour in a drop of water.*

LAMPITO. A quite magnificent oath! I'm lost for words.

LYSISTRATA. Let someone fetch a cup, and a jar of wine.

[*The SLAVE-GIRL fetches a huge wine-jar and drinking-cup.*]

MYRRHINE. My dears, what specimens! What ceramic art! 200

KALONIKE [*fondling the cup*]. Could anyone fail to handle this
with pleasure?

LYSISTRATA. Just place it here, and help me hold the beast.

[*She picks up the jar and speaks with the solemnity of a priest.*]

Divine Persuasion*—cup of female friendship—

Be kind to women, receive our sacrifice.

[*Some wine is poured from the jar.*]

KALONIKE. The blood's a lovely colour; it flows so well.

LAMPITO. And what a fine bouquet, in Kastor's name!

MYRRHINE. Allow me, ladies, to be the first to swear.

LYSISTRATA. By Aphrodite, no! Please wait your turn.

Now all must touch the cup. Come, Lampito.

Let one of you, for the group, repeat my words, 210

Then all will solemnly ratify this oath.

[*Gravely*] 'No male, be he adulterer or spouse,'

KALONIKE. 'No male, be he adulterer or spouse,'

LYSISTRATA. 'Shall come near me with prick erect.' [KALONIKE *hesitates.*]

Repeat!

KALONIKE. 'Shall come near me with—prick erect.' Oh dear!

My knees are feeling weak, Lysistrata.

LYSISTRATA [*persisting*]. 'At home I'll stay as chaste as any virgin,'

KALONIKE. 'At home I'll stay as chaste as any virgin,'

LYSISTRATA. 'Draped in a chiffon dress, my face made up,'

KALONIKE. 'Draped in a chiffon dress, my face made up,' 220
 LYSISTRATA. 'To make my husband hot with lust for me.'
 KALONIKE. 'To make my husband hot with lust for me.'
 LYSISTRATA. 'And never shall I do my husband's will.'
 KALONIKE. 'And never shall I do my husband's will.'
 LYSISTRATA. 'But if he uses force and tries to rape me,'
 KALONIKE. 'But if he uses force and tries to rape me,'
 LYSISTRATA. 'I'll still resist and never writhe with pleasure.'
 KALONIKE. 'I'll still resist and never writhe with pleasure.'
 LYSISTRATA. 'I'll never lift my sexy legs up high.'
 KALONIKE. 'I'll never lift my sexy legs up high.' 230
 LYSISTRATA. 'I'll never kneel in the lioness position.'*
 KALONIKE. 'I'll never kneel in the lioness position.'
 LYSISTRATA. 'If I keep this oath, may wine be mine to drink.'
 KALONIKE. 'If I keep this oath, may wine be mine to drink.'
 LYSISTRATA. 'But if I transgress, may the cup be filled with water.'
 KALONIKE. 'But if I transgress, may the cup be filled with water.'
 LYSISTRATA. Do all you others swear this oath?
 ALL. We do.
 LYSISTRATA [*starting to drink*].
 Now, let me sanctify this cup.
 KALONIKE [*anxiously*]. Fair shares,
 My dear! Let's all be best of friends.
 [*As they drink, an off-stage cry is heard.*]
 LAMPITO. I heard a shout. 240
 LYSISTRATA. Well, didn't I tell you so?
 It means Athena's hill, the Akropolis,
 Is in the women's hands. Come, Lampito,
 You go and settle business back in Sparta,
 But leave these girls as hostages with us.
 [*Exit LAMPITO by a side entrance: the stage building now assumes the
 identity of the Propylaia, gateway to the Akropolis.*]
 The rest of us must join the women inside
 And help them bolt and bar the Akropolis gates.*
 KALONIKE. You mean you think the men will send a force
 To deal with us at once?
 LYSISTRATA. I couldn't care less!
 Suppose they threaten to storm the place with fire:
 We're never going to open these gates to them 250

Unless they come to terms with our demands.

KALONIKE. We'll never give in! We'd lose our reputation
For being nasty and fighting tooth and nail!

[All the women enter the Akropolis. Soon afterwards, the OLD MEN's half-chorus, struggling to carry logs and a brazier up the hillside, appears from a side entrance.]

[PARODOS: 254–386]

LEADER^M. Keep up, old chap, with steady steps; ignore your
aching shoulder
That carries such a heavy load of fresh-cut olive-wood
logs.

OLD MEN. *Strophe*
Long life brings many surprises, shiver me timbers!
Who would have thought, my friends, we'd ever hear
That *women*, whom we reared 260
As blatant mischiefs in our homes,
Should seize Athena's statue,
And occupy our sacred hill,
And fasten up these massive gates
With bolts and bars?

LEADER^M. Come on, my ancient comrade, let's push on up to
the summit.
We've got to pile these logs around the site that's occupied
By all the women who've carried out this bold, audacious
deed.
Let's get to work to build it up and then ignite the bonfire:
We'll burn them all at one fell swoop; not least, the wife of
Lykon.* 270

OLD MEN. I swear that while I live their plot will fail. *Antistrophe*
Why, even when Kleomenes seized this hill,
He did not leave unscathed.* 275
For all his Spartan puff and prowess,
I made him drop his weapons.
He wore a little, patchy cloak;
He starved, he stank, he hadn't shaved
For six full years.*

We kept a vigil by the gates, in rank on rank of troops.
What trouble could I find it, then, to end the brazen scheme
Of women whom the gods detest—as Euripides does too!*

If I fail, then may my monument at Marathon collapse.*

My shoulder's crushed beneath this pair of logs.

How terrible, lord Herakles! *Antistrophe*
 The flame leapt out at me:
 It's like a mad bitch biting at my eyes.
 This fire must come from Lemnos way,*
 I'm sure of that. 300
 That must be why it has the teeth to bite.
 But onwards, nevertheless!
 Athena needs support.
 Whenever could we help her more than now? [*They blow.*]
 Pfff! Pfff! Oh, what disgusting smoke!

LEADER^M. This fire has woken up, I swear; it's really come
alive.
So let's halt here and lay our logs along this bit of ground.
[They deposit the logs.]
Now dip your vine-wood torches in the brazier, till they
burn.
Then when they're lit, we'll make a ram to batter down
the door.
And if the women still refuse and won't unlock the bolts,
We'll burn the doors and force them out by blinding them
with smoke.

Let's drop our burdens on the ground. Yuck, what
 disgusting smoke!
 Can we expect a helping hand from the generals now in
 Samos?*

Thank god that's off my back; that wood had almost
 crushed my backbone.
 It's up to you, my brazier, now to fuel the coals inside.
 I want my torch to be the first to set light to the bonfire.
 Athena Nike, goddess proud, help us defeat these women
 And place a monument to show we crushed their
 shameless deed.

[As the men continue to prepare their attack, the WOMEN's half-chorus,
 carrying water-jars, hurries on from the opposite side entrance.]

LEADER^w. Look up, my women, the atmosphere is full of soot
 and smoke.

There's fire somewhere, it's obvious: we must be quick
 to find it.

320

WOMEN. Look everywhere, before the flames *Strophe*
 Engulf our dear companions.

 The flames are fanned

 By gusting winds

 And senile windbags!

 My fear is that I've come belatedly.

 Just moments ago, in dawn's half-light,

 Down by the spring, among noisy crowds

Of women and slave-girls jostling one another for room, 330

 I snatched my jug, and rushed up here,

 To use this water

 To save my friends from burning.

 I heard that some deranged old men *Antistrophe*

 Have come with tons of timber.

 They're arsonists

 And threaten 'to cook

 These filthy bitches'.

340

 Athena, please don't let the women burn!

 They'll stop the war, the crazy war,

 And rescue Greece, as well as Athens.

Gold-crested,* patron goddess, that's why they've seized

your shrine. 344-6

O ally, hail! Tritogeneia!*
 Help us fetch water
 To quell the old men's fire.

[The two half-choruses now face up to one another: they move and act with a stylized 'pantomime' aggression which reflects their leaders' words.]

LEADER^W. Just wait a moment! What *have* we here? Some right
 old nasty codgers. 350
 God-fearing men, the decent sort, would never behave like
 this.

LEADER^M. Well here's a real surprise for us; we didn't see it
 coming.
 A hornet's nest of women here is bringing reinforcements.
 LEADER^W. What makes you look so stinking scared? Our
 numbers aren't so large.

Mind you, you've so far only seen a fraction of our forces.
 LEADER^M. Can we, my friends, allow these women to jabber in
 this fashion?
 It's time we took these logs of ours and gave them all a
 thrashing.

LEADER^W. Well let's respond by putting down our pitchers on
 the ground.
 If one of them should raise a hand, we mustn't be
 encumbered.

LEADER^M. They should, like Boupalos, have had their jaws both
 broken for them.* 360
 That way, they wouldn't have the voice to be so impudent.

LEADER^W. Well here's my jaw! Just throw a punch! I'll stand
 and let you try.

But if you do, you'll find this bitch will grab your *testicles*.
 LEADER^M. Unless you shut your mouth, I'll knock your stuffing
 out, old hag.

LEADER^W. You better hadn't even try to lay a finger on me.

LEADER^M. Suppose I beat you with my fists? What will you do
 about it?

LEADER^W. I'll sink my teeth into your ribs and rip your innards
 out!

LEADER^M. We always knew Euripides possessed poetic insight:

There is no creature on the earth as shameless as a woman.*

LEADER^W. Let's lift our pitchers up again: it's time to use this water. 370

LEADER^M. What made you, god-forsaken crone, come here with so much water?

LEADER^W. And what made *you* bring fire along, you tombstone—your cremation?

LEADER^M. I've come to build a funeral pyre, and burn your friends inside.

LEADER^W. And *I've* come here to quench the flames by dousing them with water.

LEADER^M. You think you'll quench the fire I've brought?

LEADER^W. You'll see in just a moment.

LEADER^M. I've half a mind to take this torch and grill you right away.

LEADER^W. Perhaps you've brought some soap along; you'll need it for this bath.

LEADER^M. A *bath* from you, you putrid hag?

LEADER^W [*sarcastically*]. A nuptial bath, what's more.

LEADER^M. Did you hear her outright impudence?

LEADER^W. I'm not a slave, you know.

LEADER^M. I'll stop this noisy rant of yours. 380

LEADER^W. You're not a juror now!*

LEADER^M [*brandishing torch*]. It's time to set her hair on fire.*

LEADER^W [*tipping water*]. Now do your job, my water!

LEADER^M [*pathetically*]. You're soaking me!

LEADER^W. Was the temperature right?

LEADER^M. The temperature! You've got to stop.

LEADER^W. I'm watering you to help you grow.

LEADER^M. But I'm shivering like a wilting plant.

LEADER^W. Well, as you've brought your fire with you, I'm sure you'll soon get warm.

[As the half-choruses separate, an aged COMMISSIONER* enters, accompanied by two SLAVES and four ARCHERS. He appears more concerned with airing his views than with taking control of the situation.]

COMMISSIONER. So the women's dissipation has flared again?

The usual tambourines and Sabazios stuff,

And all this roof-top nonsense with Adonis!*

[Rambling] I heard it once while sitting in the Assembly. 390

Demostratos—ill-fated fool!—was urging

We send a fleet to Sicily.* Nearby,

His wife was dancing, shrieking 'O Adonis!'

He then proposed we fetch troops from Zakynthos,*

While his drunken wife was shouting on the roof

'Bewail Adonis!' *He*, though, persevered—

The god-forsaken, impious lunatic!

So there you have it: women's wantonness!

LEADER^M. Just wait till you hear the crime of *this* lot here.

On top of all their other outrageous deeds, 400

They've soaked us to the skin; so now our cloaks

Are dripping as though we've gone and pissed ourselves.

COMMISSIONER. In Poseidon's watery name, it serves us right!

When we abet our own wives' turpitude

And give them lessons in depravity,

Such are the schemes they're bound to breed and hatch.

Just think of how we talk in craftsmen's shops:

[Lubriciously] 'You made a necklace, goldsmith, recently,

But while my wife was dancing in the evening,

The pin came out of the hole it's meant to fit. 410

Now, *I'm* about to leave for Salamis,

So if you've time, bring round your tools one evening

And re-insert the pin: my wife will like it.'

Another husband, talking to a cobbler

Who's young and has a virile prick, says this:

'My wife is having trouble with her foot:

The strap is squeezing round the fleshy cleft.

The skin's so soft; so come at noon one day

And stretch it for her: make more width inside.'

Now what a pretty pass affairs have reached: 420

Here's me, a city Commissioner—I've come

To see that timber's bought to make new oars,*

And I find myself locked out by *women*, no less!
 There's no use standing round. Just bring the crowbars.
 I'll put a stop to this criminal act of theirs.
 [*To his SLAVES*] Stop gawping, will you, wretch! You too,
 you dolt!
 You look as though you're waiting for a drink.
 Get moving with those bars beneath the gates,
 And start to prise them open. I'll do the same
 With a lever here.

430

[*The gates suddenly open and LYSISTRATA comes out.*]

LYSISTRATA. No need to force the gates.

I'm coming out voluntarily. Why use crowbars?

It's not such tools you need but careful thought.

COMMISSIONER. How dare you, filthy bitch! Arrest her, archers!

Seize her and tie her hands behind her back.

[*One ARCHER starts to approach her.*]

LYSISTRATA. By Artemis!* If he lays a finger on me,

This public slave will get it in the eye. [*The ARCHER hesitates.*]

COMMISSIONER. You're afraid of *her*? Just grab her round the
 waist.

[*To another ARCHER*] You help him too: I want her tied at
 once.

[*As the second ARCHER moves forward nervously, an OLD WOMAN, carrying a basket of wool etc., steps out from the gates behind LYSISTRATA.*]

OLD WOMAN^A. By Pandrosos!* Just lay a finger on her,
 And I'll trample you until the shit falls out.

[*The ARCHER backs off.*] 440

COMMISSIONER. 'The shit'—what shocking language! [*To the third*
 ARCHER] Hey you, come here.

Tie up this woman first, to stop her prattle.

OLD WOMAN^B [*appearing*]. By Phosphoros!* Just lay a finger on
 her,

And you'll soon acquire a shiny blue-black eye.

[*This ARCHER too backs away.*]

COMMISSIONER. What, another one! [*To the fourth ARCHER*] Quick,
 archer, here! Grab *her*.

I'll stop them coming out here to face me down.

OLD WOMAN^C [*emerging*]. By Artemis goddess of bulls! Just take
 one step!

I'll tear your hair and make you scream to hell.

[*The final ARCHER retreats.*]

COMMISSIONER [*looking round*]. What wretched fate! I've now
used all my archers.

We can't accept defeat at the hands of women: 450
[*To the ARCHERS*] Get into line, you Scythians; be prepared
To charge head-on.

LYSISTRATA. And when you do, you'll find
That we too have our troops: four companies
Of warlike women, all waiting armed inside.

COMMISSIONER [*raging*]. Twist back their arms, you Scythians:
truss them up.

[*The ARCHERS approach tentatively. LYSISTRATA calls to those inside.*]

LYSISTRATA. Come, allied women, rush to our defence!
You market-trading-vegetable-vending swarms,
You tavern-keeping-bread-and-garlic wives,*
Get hold of them and give them all a bruising.
Call them the filthiest names, show no restraint! 460
[*Various women appear and repulse the half-hearted attack of the*
ARCHERS.]

[*Like a commander*] The battle's won. Pull back: no booty-
taking.

COMMISSIONER. My archery division's been destroyed!

LYSISTRATA. Well what did you expect? Did you believe
That we'd obey like slaves? Or don't you know
That women too have spunk?

COMMISSIONER. And plenty too,
Provided alcohol is close at hand!

LEADER^M [*stepping forward*]. Commissioner of our city, you've
expended many words.

Why lock yourself in argument with *animals* like these?
Aren't you aware of what a bath they doused us in just now,
While we were wearing all our clothes—and had no soap,
what's more? 470

LEADER^W. Well now you've learnt your lesson, mate: you
shouldn't harry neighbours.

But if you do, you must expect to get a pair of shiners.
[*Demurely*] I didn't want to start a fight; my aim is like a
maiden's,

To trouble no one here at all, and keep my modest manner,
 Provided no one stirs me up and rouses me to anger.

[AGON: 476–613.]

OLD MEN.	O Zeus, how shall we deal With monsters like these? Intolerable it is. Commissioner, <i>you</i> Must help investigate: What motive could have brought them To occupy this rocky mound? And why Should they have seized our great, Our sacrosanct Akropolis?	<i>Strophe</i> 480
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LEADER^M. Come question them, and don't be duped; be sure to
 test each answer.

What shame there'd be if this affair were left unscrutinized.

COMMISSIONER. Indeed there would. And here's the first enquiry
 I shall make.

[*To LYSISTRATA*] What reason made you shut and bolt the
 Akropolis' gates like this?

LYSISTRATA. We aimed to seize the treasury, and block your
 funds for warfare.

COMMISSIONER. You think it's money that makes us fight?

LYSISTRATA.	And causes <i>all</i> our turmoil. That's why Peisandros and the rest who set their sights on power Created turmoil everywhere—to cover up their thieving. They'll never get their hands again upon the city's silver.	490
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COMMISSIONER. What makes you sure?

LYSISTRATA.	You need to ask? Well we'll be treasurers now.
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COMMISSIONER. You *women* look after the city's funds?

LYSISTRATA.	What makes you think that's strange? Don't we, your wives, already hold the purse strings in your houses?
-------------	--

COMMISSIONER. It's not the same.

LYSISTRATA. Why not?

COMMISSIONER. Because the city pays
for *warfare*.

LYSISTRATA. There isn't any need for war.

COMMISSIONER. How else could we
survive?

LYSISTRATA. We women will keep you safe and sound.

COMMISSIONER. You women?

LYSISTRATA. Yes, we.

COMMISSIONER. Outrageous!

LYSISTRATA. We *will*, no matter what you want.

COMMISSIONER. How shocking!

LYSISTRATA. Now you're angry.

There's really no alternative. 500

COMMISSIONER. Such rank contempt for justice!

LYSISTRATA. You *must* be saved, old thing.

COMMISSIONER. Against my will?

LYSISTRATA. Yes,
all the more so!

COMMISSIONER. What gives you women the right to take control
of war and peace?

LYSISTRATA. I'll tell you, then.

COMMISSIONER. And make it sharp, or else you'll pay.

LYSISTRATA. Then
listen.

And please stop waving round your arms.

COMMISSIONER. I can't: it isn't
easy

To keep my anger bottled up.

OLD WOMAN^A [*chipping in*]. Well, *you're* the one who'll pay,
then.

COMMISSIONER. I hope you croak to death, old crone. [*to* LYSISTRATA]
But *you*, explain.

LYSISTRATA. I shall do.

For quite some time we've seen your faults, yet suffered
them in silence.

We tolerated everything decided by our husbands.

You wouldn't let us grumble, yet your actions didn't please
us.

We learnt precisely what you did, and often in our houses 510
 We heard reports of bad mistakes in very serious business.
 Then, inwardly distressed, we'd wear a smile as we asked
 nicely:

'What vote went through today? Perhaps to change the
 peace inscription?'

But all my husband ever said was 'What's it all to you,
 then?

Now hold your tongue.' And so I did.

OLD WOMAN^A.

Well, *I* would never

have done so!

COMMISSIONER [*to latter*].

You would have earned a thrashing, then.

LYSISTRATA.

And that's

why *I* kept quiet.

But later on we'd learn about an even worse decision.

And then we'd ask: 'How can you, husband, all be quite
 so crazy?'

He'd scowl at me and tell me I should stick to spinning
 yarn

If I didn't want a battered head. 'Just leave the war to
 menfolk.'

520

COMMISSIONER. *Precisely* what he should have said.

LYSISTRATA.

But how,

benighted fool,

Was it ever right we weren't allowed to give you good
 advice?

Then, when we heard you in the streets complaining, broad
 as daylight:

'There isn't a man left in the land', 'You're right, it's quite
 deserted',

That's when we women came to think we ought to stand
 together

And share our strength to save all Greece. We *couldn't* hold
 off longer.

So, if you men are now prepared to take some good
 suggestions,

And hold your tongues as we did then, we'll try to rescue
 you.

COMMISSIONER. You 'rescue' us! What shocking talk! Insufferable!

LYSISTRATA.

Keep quiet!

COMMISSIONER. Keep quiet for *you*, you loathsome thing—a
woman with a veil*

530

Wrapped round her head? I'd rather die.

LYSISTRATA [*removing her veil*].
problem,

Well if my veil's the

Then take it: have it for yourself
And wrap it round your own head.

[*She attaches it to him.*]

And *then* keep quiet!

OLD WOMAN^A. And take this basket, while you're at it!

[*She thrusts it into his arms.*]

LYSISTRATA. Then hitch your tunic, chew some beans,
And work your wool.*

Just leave the war to *women*!

LEADER^W. Come, women, put your jugs aside, and rouse
yourselves for action.

It's now our turn to give our friends the help which they
deserve.

540

WOMEN.

I never could grow tired
Of dancing like this.

Antistrophe

My knees could never ache with weariness.

I'll go to any lengths

To help my fellow women.

For they've got verve and courage,

Wisdom and patriotism,

With virtue and intelligence.

LEADER^W. O bravest woman of us all, both grannies and
young mothers,

Proceed with passion, don't relent: you have the wind
behind you.

550

LYSISTRATA. Now if delicious Eros, with the Kyprian, Aphrodite,
Will make our breasts and thighs appear seductively
attractive,

And then subject our husbands to exquisite priapisms,
I'm sure the Greeks will hail us all, 'Lysimache, war-
breaker!'

COMMISSIONER. But what's your plan?

LYSISTRATA.

We'll make a start by

banning from the market
All lunatics in military dress.

OLD WOMAN.

We shall, by Aphrodite!

LYSISTRATA. At present, in the Agora, among the traders' stalls
These people wander round in arms, like frenzied
Korybantics.

COMMISSIONER. Of course they're armed, our soldiers brave.

LYSISTRATA.

But

what a silly sight
To see a man with Gorgon-shield just buying fish for
supper.*

560

OLD WOMAN. The other day I saw a long-haired cavalry
commander,

Yes, buying porridge on his horse: he put it in his helmet!
Nearby, a Thracian mercenary, with weapons just like
Tereus,
Had petrified a poor old woman, and then gulped down
her figs.

COMMISSIONER. Well how could *women* like yourselves resolve
such tangled matters
In all the various parts of Greece?

LYSISTRATA.

Dead easy!

COMMISSIONER.

Oh? Then show

me.

[LYSISTRATA *takes some wool and a spindle from the basket: she gives a demonstration as she speaks.*]

LYSISTRATA. We'll deal with them precisely like a tangled skein
of wool.

We use our spindles in this way, to separate the strands.
And that's how we'll resolve this war, if only we're allowed,
By using embassies to separate the warring factions.

570

COMMISSIONER. You think that all your skeins of wool, and
implements like spindles,

Can show you how to stop a war? What fools!

LYSISTRATA.

If you were

sane,

You'd model *all* your politics on our wool-working methods.

COMMISSIONER. Explain your point, and let me see.

LYSISTRATA [*proceeding to demonstrate from the basket*].

To start with,

treat the city

As women do a filthy fleece, by washing off the grease,
Then stretching it and picking out the nasty, prickly bits.
Next, find the ones who club together and press themselves
all tight

In quest for power:* then comb them out, and pluck off all
their heads.

Now fill your basket with communal fabric of goodwill,
With room for everyone, including well-disposed outsiders, 580
And even debtors to the state; there's space to mix them in.
Then don't forget the colonies sent out abroad by Athens:*

You ought to recognize that each is like a flock of wool.
Then take together all these strands, from all these different
sources,

And draw them, bind them into one great mighty ball of
wool,

From which to weave a nice warm cloak for all the city's
people.

COMMISSIONER. How shocking that these women spin out all this
woolly nonsense!

They've played so small a part in war.

LYSISTRATA. 'So small', repulsive
blockhead!

We pay a *double* price for war. For first we bear our
children,

And send them out as fighting troops, but— 590

COMMISSIONER. Silence! Don't
stir trouble.

LYSISTRATA. Then, when we should be finding joy and pleasure
in our marriage,

We sleep alone, because of war. And it's not just wives
who suffer.

Think of the maidens growing old, unmarried. How it
grieves me!

COMMISSIONER. And don't men too grow old?

LYSISTRATA. Of course, but
things are rather different.

Even a grey-haired man can find a youthful bride to marry.

A woman's chance is very brief, and if she doesn't seize it
No man will ever marry her: she sits and waits for omens.*

COMMISSIONER. Well while a man can get it up—

LYSISTRATA [*aggressively*].

Look, isn't it time you just dropped dead?
There are burial plots, and coffins for sale; 600
I'll bake your funeral cake myself.

[*Setting about him*]

And *there's* a wreath to boot!

OLD WOMAN^A.

And take some ribbons for your corpse!

OLD WOMAN^B.

And there's another wreath for you!*

LYSISTRATA. You've everything. Get in the boat:

Old Charon's calling you aboard,
He's waiting just for *you*.

[*The COMMISSIONER manages to extricate himself, and starts to leave.*]

COMMISSIONER. It's shocking I should be abused like this.

I swear I'll go directly, in this garb,

And show my fellow magistrates my plight. [*Exits.*] 610

LYSISTRATA [*calling after*]. You won't complain we failed to wash
the corpse?

In two days' time we'll come at crack of dawn

And have our offerings ready for your grave.

[*LYSISTRATA and the OLD WOMEN go back inside the Akropolis, leaving the
two half-choruses to face one another.*]

[PARABASIS: 614-705]

LEADER^M. Now's no time for idle dozing; every free man must
look sharp.

Let's remove our cloaks, my fellows: down to business
straight away.

[*The OLD MEN remove their cloaks to dance.*]

OLD MEN.

I swear I'm on the scent *Strophe*

Of bigger and more dangerous plots.

Indeed, I get a whiff of Hippias's tyranny!*

My fear is that some Spartan males 620

Have rendezvoused with Kleisthenes:

They're now inciting god-forsaken women
 To use their stealth and seize our revenues—
 The source of all my jury-pay!* 625

LEADER^M. I'm shocked, completely shocked. To think that *they*,
 the female sex,
 Should lecture all us citizens and prate about bronze shields,
 While seeking ways to make a truce between us and the
 Spartans—
 The Spartans, who deserve our trust no more than hungry
 wolves!*
 They've woven snares against the city; it's tyranny they're
 after. 630
 But *I* won't let them tyrannize, I'm always on my guard.
 Yes, I shall 'wear my sword' for ever 'beneath a myrtle
 branch',*
 And stand in arms by Aristogeiton in the market place.
 [*Raising their right arms, they move towards the women.*]
 I'll stand like this, in tight-knit rank, all poised to aim a
 blow
 Against the jaw of this decrepit, god-forsaken hag.

LEADER^W. *If* you do, you'll find your own face soon gets
 smashed into a pulp.
 Now's the time, my aged friends, to place our cloaks down
 on the ground.
 [*The WOMEN remove their cloaks, matching the OLD MEN's earlier
 action.*]

WOMEN. O citizens of Athens, *Antistrophe*
 We have some useful things to say.
 Why should we not? I too was reared in splendour by the
 city. 640
 At seven, I served Athena's cult,
 At ten, I ground the goddess's corn,
 And shed my dress to be a bear at Brauron;
 As basket-carrier too I served when young,
 Adorned in dried-fig necklace.*

LEADER^W. Now, who'll dispute my right to give the city good advice?
 It's true that I'm a woman, but suspend your prejudice
 And wait to see if I propose improvements to our plight. 650

LEADER^M. If anyone allows this lot to get a slight advantage,
We'll never see a limit to their scheming artifice.
Perhaps they'll use our funds to build a navy of their own,
Then try to smash our ships to bits, like Artemisia did.*
Or if they turn to cavalry, who'd give the knights a
chance?

For legs astride is *the* position every woman loves;
They grip so hard and never slip. Recall the Amazons:.*
They rode on horseback into war, as Mikon's painting shows.
[They move threateningly, once more, towards the women.]

But what we need for all these women is sets of wooden
stocks:

We'd grab them by the neck like this, and lock them in for
good!

680

WOMEN. If you rouse me up to fever pitch, *Antistrophe*
 Then you'll find my anger turns into a blazing sow.
 First of all I'll tear your hair, until you start to scream for help!
 [*Imitating*]

Women, we should also shed more clothes,
 Till we 'smell' of women with a rage to bite. 690

Now let anyone attack me!

If he does, he's finished:

He's had his final supper.

Now my anger's boiling: watch your tongues,
 Or I'll play Aesop's beetle to your eagle's eggs.*

LEADER^w. Your threats don't make me flinch at all, while
 Lampito's alive,
 As well as that dear girl from Thebes, the fine Ismenia.*
 You'll find you've lost the power you had, your votes
 won't count a jot,
 Especially since you're hated by your neighbours all
 around.

The other day I planned a feast to honour Hekate; 700
 I wanted to invite along a friend from down the road,
 A fine and sweet young thing she is—a Boiotian eel, in
 fact!*

'She can't be sent,' the answer came, 'your state-decrees
 forbid it.'

[*They move towards the men, mirroring the aggression of 680-1.*]

Well, what will stop these mad decrees? There's one sure
 remedy:

To take you by the leg, then throw you down and break
 your neck.

[*The parabasis complete, the half-choruses move aside. Some days have
 now passed since the occupation. LYSISTRATA emerges anxiously from the
 Akropolis. The following exchange burlesques the ethos of tragedy—until*
 715.]

LEADER^w. O mistress of this deed, this mighty scheme,
 What brings you out of doors with such dark looks?

LYSISTRATA. The acts, the female thoughts of wicked women

Oppress my spirit—and make me pace out here.

WOMEN [*wailing*]. Say more! Say more!

710

LYSISTRATA [*similarly*]. It's true, it's true.

LEADER^W. Reveal the horror! Disclose it to your friends.

LYSISTRATA. To speak is shameful; silence too is hard.

LEADER^W. Do not conceal the woe that now is ours.

LYSISTRATA [*plainly*]. Well, in a word—we're dying to be
fucked!

WOMEN. Alas, O Zeus!

LYSISTRATA. Why call on Zeus? What difference can he make?

I've lost the power to keep the women up here,
Cut off from their husbands like this. They're slipping away.

I caught the first one trying to open a hole 720

Just down the slope, right next to Pan's old grotto.

Another I caught wriggling down a pulley, no less.*

What a way to desert! A third was ready to fly

Astride a *dicky* bird, to find some Johnny;

I caught her by the hair and pulled her back.

There's no excuse beyond them, to make a chance

To go back home. [*The door opens and WOMAN^A emerges furtively.*]

Look, here's another one now!

Hey you, why such a hurry?

WOMAN^A. I must get home.

I've left my woollen fabrics from Miletos;

They're being ravaged by the moths. 730

LYSISTRATA. The moths!

Get back inside!

WOMAN^A. I promise I'll come straight back,

As soon as I've spread my things out on the bed.

LYSISTRATA. You'll spread out nothing! You certainly can't go
home.

WOMAN^A. But surely my fabrics will be destroyed.

LYSISTRATA. Hard luck!

[*A second woman appears.*]

WOMAN^B. Oh dear, oh dear! My poor old stalks of flax,

They're waiting to be stripped.

LYSISTRATA. Another one!

[*Suggestively*] She wants to go and finger stalks of flax.

Get back inside!

WOMAN^B. But *please*, in Hekate's name!

I'll be straight back when I've peeled the outside off.

LYSISTRATA. You'll peel off nothing! For if you make a start, 740

Every other woman will want to do the same.

[A third woman rushes out, clutching her belly.]

WOMAN^C. O mistress Eileithya, stop the birth

Until I get myself to sacred ground!

LYSISTRATA. What's all this guff?

WOMAN^C.

I'm almost giving birth!

LYSISTRATA. But I didn't see you pregnant *yesterday*.

WOMAN^C. I am today! Please send me home at once.

I need a midwife, quickly.

LYSISTRATA [examining her]. What d'you mean?

There's something hard in here.

WOMAN^C.

A baby boy.

LYSISTRATA [tapping]. By Aphrodite, it sounds as though you've got

A bronze and hollow belly. I'll soon find out.

750

[Opens the dress.]

Oh how absurd! To use Athena's helmet*

To claim you're pregnant!

WOMAN^C.

Listen—I swear I am!

LYSISTRATA. So why take *this*?

WOMAN^C.

In case of emergency.

Suppose I had to give birth on the hill,

[Demonstrating] I'd squat on this—the way that pigeons do.

LYSISTRATA. What cock and bull! A patent pack of lies.

[Removes the helmet.]

You'll stay with us for your helmet's family party.*

WOMAN^C. I just can't get a wink of sleep up here,

Ever since I caught a glimpse of the guardian snake.*

WOMAN^B. And *I* can't sleep as well; it's all those owls.*

760

They spend the whole night hooting endlessly.

LYSISTRATA. I beg you, please give up this silly twaddle.

No doubt you miss your husbands. Don't you think

That they miss *us*? I'm certain they must find

Their nights unbearable. Stand firm, my friends:

An oracle predicts that victory's ours,

Provided we don't feud. [producing a scroll] Look, here it is.

WOMAN^C. Oh, tell us what it says.

LYSISTRATA.

Keep quiet, then.

[In solemn tones] 'Should swallows huddle together, and stay

in a single enclosure,

770

Fleeing away from the hoopoes,* abstaining from genital
contact,

Then will their sufferings cease, and the higher be turned
into lower,

All by high-thundering Zeus—'

WOMAN^C [*interrupting*].

We women will now lie on

top, then?

LYSISTRATA. 'Should the time ever arrive when swallows will
quarrel and flutter,

Flying away from the holiest shrine, then all will discover

No other bird in the sky loves debauchery more than this
creature.'

WOMAN^C. I've never heard an oracle quite so clear!

LYSISTRATA. So let's not tire or give it up just yet.

Come back inside. It really would be shameful

For us, my dears, to let the oracle down. 780

[*All back inside. The two half-choruses take up their positions for an
exchange of songs.*]

OLD MEN.

Time to tell a little fable

Strophe

Which I heard while still a child.

There lived a young man once, his name Melanion,* 785

Who fled from marriage off into the wild,

To live on mountain slopes.

Now there he hunted hares

By means of woven nets, 790

And kept some sort of dog,

But never came back home, such was his hate.

So that's how much disgust he felt for women.

We share his feelings too—and his good sense!

[*The OLD MEN start to approach the WOMEN; the LEADERS speak, while the
other dancers perform matching actions.*]

LEADER^M. [*with mock affection*].

May I have a kiss, old hag?

LEADER^W. First, stop eating onions!

LEADER^M. May I lift your legs*—and kick you?

LEADER^W. What a bushy pubic region!* 800

LEADER^M. Yes, Myronides was like this,

With a black and bristling rump

Which he showed to all his foes.

And Phormio was just the same.*

WOMEN. I too want to tell a fable *Antistrophe*
 Quite unlike Melanion's.
 There lived a homeless drifter: Timon was his name.
 He hid his face inside a thorny thicket, 810
 His life was grim as death.
 So Timon now, this fellow,
 Went off and fed on hate,
 And lived on mountain slopes.*
 He called down curses on all evil men.
 And that's how much he shared our hate for males;
 To *women*, though, he stayed the best of friends. 820

[*The women approach the men, copying their action at 797 ff.*]

LEADER^W. Shall I thump you on the jaw?

LEADER^M [*ironically*].

Please don't. I'm quite afraid.

LEADER^W. What about a hefty kick?

LEADER^M. If you do, I'll see your pussy.

LEADER^W. What you'd see would not be hairy.

Old I may be, but you'd find

All is neatly trimmed and tidy:

I know how to use a lamp.*

[*A scream of alarm is heard. LYSISTRATA, soon followed by MYRRHINE and other women, appears on the roof of the stage-building, which represents the battlements of the Akropolis.*]

LYSISTRATA. Help! Help! Come over here at once, my women.

WOMAN. Is something wrong? What's all the shouting for? 830

LYSISTRATA. A man, a man! I can see him coming near.

[*Coyly*] He's stricken by Aphrodite's sacred needs!

O goddess, queen of Kypros, Kythera, Paphos,

Please keep us safe—but keep it up as well!

WOMAN. Where is this man you mean?

LYSISTRATA [*pointing*]. By Chloe's shrine.*

WOMAN. Oh yes, I see. Whoever could he be?

LYSISTRATA. Look, all of you. Does anyone know him?

MYRRHINE. Eeek!

I certainly do. It's Kinesias, my husband.

LYSISTRATA. It's *your* job, then, to roast him on a spit.

Seduce him—but withhold the love you offer. 840

And *dangle* everything—but keep our oath!

MYRRHINE. Of course. I'll get to work.

LYSISTRATA. And I'll stay here
To lend you help in working your seduction,
And help you make him *sizzle*. The rest should leave.

[*Other women off, and MYRRHINE stands back. Enter KINESIAS, with erect phallus beneath his cloak and accompanied by a SLAVE carrying a BABY.*]

KINESIAS. I just can't take much more of this distension!

The strain's as bad as torture on the wheel!*

LYSISTRATA [*aggressively*]. Who's there, inside the sentry line?

KINESIAS. It's
me.

LYSISTRATA. A man?

KINESIAS. Of course a man.

LYSISTRATA. Then clear right off!

KINESIAS. And who are *you* to eject me?

LYSISTRATA. I'm the look-out.

KINESIAS. I beg you, by the gods, call out Myrrhine. 850

LYSISTRATA. Call out Myrrhine for *you*! But what's your name?

KINESIAS. Kinesias, from Paionidai*—her husband.

LYSISTRATA [*softening*]. O greetings, dear. Your name's familiar
here:

We've heard a lot about your reputation.

Your wife forever has you on her *lips*.

So when she takes an apple or an egg,*

She says, 'For my Kinesias!'

KINESIAS. Ye gods!

LYSISTRATA. She does, by Aphrodite! When we start

Discussing our husbands' lives, then straight away

Your wife claims you're a *man* without compare. 860

KINESIAS. Then call her out.

LYSISTRATA. Well, are you willing to pay?

KINESIAS. I certainly am, if it's what you really want.

[*Pointing to phallus*] Look what I've got: I'll happily make it
yours.

LYSISTRATA. I'll go inside and call her out.

KINESIAS. Be quick!

[LYSISTRATA *goes inside.*]

[*Sentimentally*] My life has been without a trace of joy
Ever since my wife departed from the house.

I feel oppressed each time I come back home.
 The whole place seems deserted. Even food
 Gives me no pleasure at all. It's this erection!

[MYRRHINE *appears above, speaking back to* LYSISTRATA.]

MYRRHINE. I love, I love him so. But he doesn't want 870
 To be loved by me. So please don't call me out.

KINESIAS. My sweetie-pie Myrrhine, what are you doing?
 Please come down here.

MYRRHINE. Down there? You must be joking.

KINESIAS. Not even when it's me who asks, Myrrhine?

MYRRHINE. You don't have any need to call me out.

KINESIAS. No *need*! I'm in excruciating pain!

MYRRHINE [*retreating*]. Goodbye.

KINESIAS [*desperately*]. No, please don't go. You can't
 ignore

Our *baby*. [*He touches the* BABY.] Call your mummy, little one.

BABY. Ma-ma, ma-ma, ma-ma.

KINESIAS [*to* MYRRHINE]. What's wrong? You don't feel sorry for
 your baby, 880

Who's not been washed or breastfed five whole days?

MYRRHINE. Of course I do. But its *father* couldn't care less.

KINESIAS. Don't wrangle, just come down for the baby's sake.

MYRRHINE. What it is to be a mother! I'd better go down.

[*She goes inside.*]

KINESIAS [*excited*]. I'm sure my wife looks younger than before;

Her eyes have somehow got a softer look.

And all this temper and this haughtiness,

It only makes me want her all the more.

[MYRRHINE *appears from the Akropolis gates and goes to the* BABY.]

MYRRHINE. My little darling! What a wicked father you've got!
 Just let me kiss you, mummy's little darling. 890

[*She takes the* BABY.]

KINESIAS [*approaching*]. You're cruel! What's made you do these
 things and follow

These other women? You're just oppressing me

And feeling pain yourself.

MYRRHINE. Just keep your hands off!

KINESIAS. And as for all our property in the house,
 You're letting it go to ruin.

MYRRHINE. What's that to me?
 KINESIAS. You mean you're not concerned if valuable wool
 Is damaged by the poultry?
 MYRRHINE. I'm certainly not.
 KINESIAS [*coily*]. You haven't practised Aphrodite's rites
 For such a long time. You really must come home.
 MYRRHINE. No, never—unless you men will stop the war 900
 And make a peace.
 KINESIAS. Well, once it's been decided,
 Of course we will.
 MYRRHINE [*sarcastically*].
 Well, 'once it's been decided'
 I'll come back home. For now, I've sworn I won't.
 KINESIAS [*desperately*]. It's been so long, please lie down here
 with me.*
 MYRRHINE. I can't—and yet I won't deny I love you.
 KINESIAS. You do? Then, lie down straight away, my Myrrhi!
 MYRRHINE. How ludicrous! Right here in front of the baby?
 KINESIAS. Of course not. [*He gives the BABY to the slave.*] Manes,*
 take the baby home. [SLAVE *exits.*]
 So there: the baby's well and truly dealt with.
 You'll surely lie down now? 910
 MYRRHINE. But where, my dear,
 Could we *do* it?
 KINESIAS [*looking around*]. Where? Inside Pan's grotto is fine.
 MYRRHINE. But I'd be impure; I couldn't go back inside.
 KINESIAS. Why not, if you washed in the spring, Klepsydra, first?
 MYRRHINE. I've sworn an oath. You want me to perjure myself?
 KINESIAS. May the punishment fall on *me*: forget your oath.
 MYRRHINE. All right—but let me fetch a small bed.
 KINESIAS. No!
 The ground will do.
 MYRRHINE. You may be desperate,
 But it's out of the question to lie down on the ground.
 [She goes inside.]
 KINESIAS. My wife still loves me: that's entirely clear.
 [MYRRHINE returns with a light bedframe.]
 MYRRHINE. Right, lie straight down; I'm taking my clothes off now.
 [KINESIAS gets onto the bed.] 920
 But no—I'll tell you what: we need a mattress.

KINESIAS. A mattress! I certainly don't.

MYRRHINE.

Of course you do:

The straps are hard.

KINESIAS [*trying to hold her back*].

But let me kiss you first.

MYRRHINE. Well there you are.

KINESIAS.

Mmmmmmm! Now come back soon.

[MYRRHINE *goes inside again, and returns with a mattress.*]

MYRRHINE. Right, there's the mattress. Lie on it, while I strip.

But no—I'll tell you what: you need a pillow.

KINESIAS. I've everything I need!

MYRRHINE.

Well I need more.

[*In again.*]

KINESIAS. My prick's like Herakles—hungry but cheated of food!

MYRRHINE [*returning with pillows*]. Come on, lift up. That's everything I want.

KINESIAS. It's more than enough! Please lie down now, my treasure.

930

MYRRHINE. I'll just undo my bra—but don't forget,

You won't deceive me, will you, over peace.

KINESIAS. If I do, then damn my eyes!

MYRRHINE [*suddenly*].

You need a blanket.

KINESIAS. It's not a blanket I need—it's just a fuck!

MYRRHINE. Of course, you'll get your chance. I won't be long.

KINESIAS. This woman will finish me off, with all her bedding!

MYRRHINE [*returning with blanket*]. Just lift yourself.

KINESIAS [*pointing to phallus*].

Is *this* not

high enough?

MYRRHINE. Would you like some perfume?

KINESIAS.

No, for god's sake, no!

MYRRHINE. You've got to have some, whether you want or not. [*In.*]

KINESIAS. I hope to heaven her perfume all gets spilt!

940

MYRRHINE [*returning with perfume*]. Now give me your hand and rub that on yourself.

KINESIAS [*smelling*]. This perfume isn't suitable at all:

Its fragrance doesn't *penetrate* enough.

MYRRHINE. Oh dear, I've gone and brought the Rhodian scent.*

KINESIAS. No, look—it's fine. Forget it, please.

MYRRHINE.

You're silly. [*In again.*]

KINESIAS. Damnation on the man who first made perfume!

MYRRHINE [*returning*]. Here, take another bottle.

KINESIAS.

I don't need two.

Stop being heartless. Lie down, just forget
The rest.

MYRRHINE. I'll do exactly what you want. [*Stepping backwards.*]

I'm taking off my shoes. Remember, darling, 950

Be sure you vote for peace. [*She slips back into the Akropolis.*]

KINESIAS.

Of course I will.

[*Looks round and realizes that MYRRHINE has gone.*]

My wife's sadistic! Such a fierce tormentor!

To stretch my skin so far, then disappear!

[*Chanting like a lamenting hero*]

What's left for me? What chance of a fuck?

The loveliest woman has made me her dupe.

How will I nurse this thing of mine?

[*To the audience*]

Where's Foxy the pimp?*

Procure a wet-nurse for me!

LEADER^M [*with mock-tragic sympathy*].

You're in a dreadful plight, poor wretch.

Your life's been crushed by harsh deceit.

960

I'm moved to pity you.

What innards could withstand such woe?

What kind of mind? What testicles?

What groin, what haunch

Could stand this strain

Without an early-morning fuck?

KINESIAS. O Zeus, what spasms of fresh pain!

LEADER^M. All your afflictions are due alone

To a loathsome, hateful female.

KINESIAS. No—dear, delicious wife!

970

LEADER^M. Delicious? *Vile*, she's vile.

KINESIAS. You're right, she's vile. O Zeus, O Zeus,

I pray that you may sweep her up

With a mighty blast of hurricane

And swing her, fling her through the air

Before releasing her once more,

And letting her fall to earth again

Where, lo and behold, she'd find herself

Astride my swollen cock!

[As KINESIAS turns, enter a Spartan HERALD,* an erect phallus bulging beneath his cloak.]

HERALD. Can you tell me where to find the Athenian Elders,* 980
Or the Council committee? I've got some news for them.

KINESIAS. And what are *you*? A man—or priapic god?*

HERALD. A herald, young man, from Sparta, by the Twins!
I've come to ask for peace negotiations.

KINESIAS [*pointing to the HERALD's phallus*]. I suppose that's why
you've brought a spear along!

HERALD [*embarrassed*]. I swear I've no such thing.

KINESIAS. Why turn
away?

Then what's this bulge beneath your cloak? Perhaps
The journey's swollen your groin?

HERALD. I swear, by Kastor,
This man's deranged!

KINESIAS. You've got a hard on, liar!

HERALD. I swear I haven't. Stop babbling utter nonsense! 990

KINESIAS [*lifting the HERALD's cloak*].

And what's this here?

HERALD. A Spartan message-stick.*

KINESIAS [*gesturing*]. Well if that's so, I've got one here myself!

You can speak the truth to one who understands.

Now, what's the situation back in Sparta?

HERALD. The whole of Sparta's up in—well, just *up*.

Our allies too. They've all got hards. It's dire.

KINESIAS. But what's the cause of all your tribulation?

A curse from Pan?

HERALD. No, Lampito led the way,

And all the other Spartan women joined her.

They reached agreement when to hatch their plot, 1000

Then banned their husbands from their entrances.

KINESIAS. Can you cope?

HERALD. Of course we can't. We walk bent over,
As though we're screening lamps, to keep them lit.

[*He mimics the walk of a lamp-carrier, with his arms round his
phallus.*]

Our wives won't let us touch their bushy plants*

Until we all, by common accord, decide

To make a peace that binds the whole of Greece.

KINESIAS. This whole affair's one huge conspiracy
 By all our wives. At last, I understand!
 Look, hurry home and tell your countrymen
 To send ambassadors back with open mandate.
 I'll ask the Council here to do the same:
 They can't refuse—I'll let them see my prick!

1010

HERALD. I'll rush back home. An excellent suggestion.

[Both exit by opposite side entrances.]

[The two half-choruses once again confront one another, but this time the WOMEN's approach is different. As before, the dancers follow their LEADERS' example.]

LEADER^M. Nowhere will you find a beast that's quite as fierce as
 womankind.

Fire itself is not so harsh. No leopardess is quite so bold.

LEADER^W. Now you understand my nature, will you still make
 war on me?

Even though you've got the chance, you brute, to have
 me as a friend?

LEADER^M. Rest assured I'll never cease to execrate the female sex.

LEADER^W. *Should* you change your mind, the offer stands. But
 anyhow,

Surely now you need some clothes on. What a funny sight
 you are!

1020

Let me come and wrap you in the tunic which you shed
 before.*

[She wraps his tunic round his shoulders.]

LEADER^M. *That*, I must confess, was not an altogether hostile act.

When I threw it off, my own hostility was goading me.

LEADER^W. Now you're looking somewhat manly; now you're
 not so ludicrous.

If you weren't so petulant, I might consider helping you
 Take this insect from your eye: it's clearly causing irritation.

LEADER^M *[softening]*. Ah! so that's what made me angry. Here's
 a ring to help remove it.

Scrape it out, and when you've got it, let me see just what
 it was.

All along it's been so vexing, interfering with my sight.

LEADER^W. Count on me to show you kindness, all despite your
 peevishness.

1030

[*She touches his face, as though removing something from his eye.*]
Zeus above! I've never seen so large a gnat in someone's
eye.

Take a look: you'll rarely find an insect species so immense.

LEADER^M [*sentimentally*]. Thanks for being so kind! That gnat
was digging a well inside my eye:

Now it's out, my eyes are watering—tears are running
down my cheeks.

LEADER^W. Never mind, I'll wipe them for you—even though
you *are* a brute.

Here's a kiss too.

LEADER^M. No, don't kiss me!

LEADER^W. Yes I will, whatever
you say.

LEADER^M. Oh confound you! How can I resist a woman's
artfulness?

Now the truth of that old saying starts to dawn upon my
brain:

'Life with women's too appalling; life without them's just
the same.'

Time has come to make a truce, upon the understanding
that

1040

Neither party does the other any harm in word or deed.

Let us join our ranks together, then embark upon a song.

[*The two half-choruses now, and for the rest of the play, amalgamate
themselves into a single CHORUS of twenty-four.*]

CHORUS. First a message for our audience: *Strophe A*
We do not propose to slander
Any Athenian citizen.

Everything we say and do will fill your minds with happy
thoughts, 1046-7

Since the city's present troubles hardly need to be increased.*

Let the word be spread by every man and woman: 1050

When a person's short of money,
We have lots at home—yes, bags of it.

If, one day, the war is over,*
Those who sign for loans with me
Never, ever need repay—
Since they'll never see the cash!

We're about to wine and dine Strophe B

Some Karystian visitors—

Actually, they're VIPs. 1060

Soup will start the menu off, and then we'll eat a sucking-pig:

Ready-roasted this is waiting, tender cuts of pork for all.

See you round at mine today, but don't be late:

Have a bath before you come;

Bring your children; feel no need to knock;

Just imagine that you're walking

Into your own property—

Since you'll find in any case 1070

Bolts are fastened on the door!

[Enter, from a side entrance, long-haired Spartan ENVOYS, with erect phalluses beneath their cloaks.]

LEADER. Here come some Spartan envoys now: their hairy faces
prove it.*

And what a bulge around their thighs! It seems they're
wearing tents.

Official greetings to you, men of Sparta,

Do tell us what has brought you here today.

SPARTAN. What need is there for lengthy explanation?

You see precisely what has brought us here.

LEADER. Phew! Yes, a tense condition you're suffering from!

I see that matters now are worse *inflamed*.

SPARTAN. Incredibly! The facts speak for themselves. 1080

We badly need an offer of terms for peace.

[Enter Athenian ENVOYS, bent over by the same affliction and
accompanied by SLAVES.]

LEADER. Look over here. Some natives are approaching:

They're bending forwards just as wrestlers do,

To make their cloaks hang loosely from their groins.

[Mock-medically] I diagnose a case of grave tumescence!

ATHENIAN. We need to find Lysistrata at once.

[Revealing his phallus] The plight we're in is plain for all
to see.

LEADER [pointing]. This sickness is a perfect match for *that*.

[Diagnostically] D'you find distension most acute at dawn?

ATHENIAN. Not half! We've been reduced to desperation! 1090

Unless a resolution's quickly found,
We'll be compelled to fuck old Kleisthenes.

LEADER. I'd recommend you promptly close your cloaks:

In case those herm-defacers notice you.*

ATHENIAN. My god! That's good advice.

SPARTAN. Yes, by the Twins!

I quite agree. Let's fasten up our garb.

ATHENIAN [*regaining dignity*]. We're glad you've come; we've
been through misery here.

SPARTAN. We too, dear friend, have been in real distress.

To think of people seeing us all aroused!

ATHENIAN. Right, let's begin negotiations proper.

1100

What brings you here?

SPARTAN. We've come to seek a truce,

As envoys.

ATHENIAN. Good to hear! We want the same.

We ought to call Lysistrata at once.

There's no one else who knows the way to peace.

SPARTAN [*desperately*]. Be quick, or else I'll need to take a *man*!

ATHENIAN. But look, no need for us to call her out.

She must have heard; she's coming out here herself.

[*Enter LYSISTRATA from the Akropolis gates.*]

LEADER [*declaiming*]. Hail, boldest of the female sex. It's time
for you to be

Both fierce and gentle, fine and coarse, quite haughty yet
benign.

The foremost men in all of Greece are captured by your
spell:

1110

They're here, and have agreed that you should mediate
between them.

LYSISTRATA. The task will not be hard, provided that

Their passions are inflamed but lack deceit.

I'll soon find out. Call Reconciliation!*

[*Enter the naked RECONCILIATION from the Akropolis.*]

To start with, bring the Spartans here to me.

And don't adopt a rough or surly manner—

Not like our husbands' former boorishness—

But lead them in a feminine, friendly way.

If they refuse their hands, just grab their knobs.

[RECONCILIATION *ushers the Spartans to* LYSISTRATA's *side.*]

Now bring the Athenians over here as well: 1120

Take hold of any part they offer you.

[RECONCILIATION *does the same with the Athenians.*]

Envoys from Sparta, stand right by me here,

And you Athenians there. Now hear my speech.

[LYSISTRATA *begins solemnly, though the ENVOYS concentrate on* RECONCILIATION's *anatomy.*]

'A woman I am, but not without sharp wits.'*

My own intelligence is quite robust,

And hearing words of wisdom from my father

Has added greatly to my education.

So now I wish to take both parties here

And reprimand you justly—you who share

A common ritual, just like men of kin, 1130

At Olympia, Thermopylai, and Delphi*

(The list could be extended, if required),

Yet while barbarian armies lie nearby,*

You send Greek men and cities to destruction.

[*Formally.*] 'That is my first contention now complete.'*

ATHENIAN. Well, *my* destruction stems from this erection!

LYSISTRATA. Now, Spartans, I'll address myself to you.

Don't you remember how your countryman,

Perikleidas, came here once as suppliant?

At the altar, pale-faced in a scarlet cloak, 1140

He begged for troops. For at that time Messene

Was in revolt, and Poseidon's earthquake shook.

Kimon went off, and with four thousand hoplites

He saved the whole of Sparta's territory.*

Yet in return for this Athenian help,

You ravage the very land which rescued you.*

ATHENIAN. That shows they're in the wrong, Lysistrata.

SPARTAN. We're in the wrong. [*Examining* RECONCILIATION] But
what a magnificent arse!

LYSISTRATA [*turning*]. You think I've no reproof for *you*, Athenians?

Don't you remember how in turn the Spartans 1150

Came armed with spears, when you were dressed like slaves,

And slaughtered many Thessalian combatants

And many other friends of Hippias?*

It was they alone who forced the tyrants out,

And liberated you: they gave the people
The chance to wear once more the cloak of freedom.*

SPARTAN [*as before*]. I've never seen a more voluptuous woman.

ATHENIAN. Nor I, in all my life, a finer cunt.

LYSISTRATA. Why, then, when precedents like these exist,

D'you go to war and keep up all your hatred? 1160

Why not be reconciled? Well, what's to stop it?

[*Both SPARTAN and ATHENIAN treat RECONCILIATION's anatomy as a map of Greece.*]

SPARTAN. Well, we want peace—provided we get back

This round, enclosed part.

LYSISTRATA. Which?

SPARTAN. The rear—of Pylos.

We've long requested it, and tried to probe.

ATHENIAN. Poseidon hear my oath, that's *not* for you!

LYSISTRATA. Please let them have it.

ATHENIAN. But where will we thrust
then?

LYSISTRATA. Demand another part in return for this.

ATHENIAN [*pointing between the legs*]. Let's see, then: we
demand that you return

This scrubby part—Echinous—and the orifice

Of the Malian gulf, as well as Megara's legs.* 1170

SPARTAN. No, by the Twins! Not *both* legs, my good friend.

LYSISTRATA. O let them! Don't start squabbling over legs.

ATHENIAN. I want to get this land and sow my seed.

SPARTAN. And I to spread manure out, by the Twins!

LYSISTRATA. You'll get your chance, once fully reconciled.

Now if you're sure, then formally decide

And go to get agreement from your allies.

ATHENIAN. Consult our allies! But look at our erections!

Both sets of allies surely won't dissent:

They'll want to fuck. 1180

SPARTAN. I'm certain, by the Twins,

That goes for *ours*.

ATHENIAN. And for the Karystians too!

LYSISTRATA. Well said! In that case, purify yourselves,

In order that we wives may entertain you

With all the contents of our festive baskets.*

Inside you'll swear an oath to show good faith.
 And then each one of you can take his wife
 And go back home.

ATHENIAN. Well, let's waste no more time.

SPARTAN. Lead on, Lysistrata!

ATHENIAN. Without delay!

[LYSISTRATA leads the ENVOYS into the Akropolis; their SLAVES sit down outside the gates. The CHORUS gathers for a dance which matches 1043-71 in form.]

CHORUS Woven blankets, finest mantles, *Antistrophe A*
 First-rate cloaks, gold jewellery— 1190
 I'm prepared to lend the lot.

Never would I hesitate to lend you clothes for all your sons,
 Or for when your daughter serves as basket-carrier to the state.*

Everyone is welcome, I invite you all:
 Come and borrow from my house.
 Nothing need be locked away from you.

All that's there is yours to take. 1200
 Only, be prepared to find
 (If my eyes aren't going blind)
 That there's nothing left at all!*

Anyone who's short of food *Antistrophe B*
 For his slaves and little children,
 Ought to get supplies from me.
 Finest barley-grain is stored inside my house. The bread it makes
 Swells to loaves of handsome size, all baked for you in quantity.

All who live in penury should come to see me; 1210
 Bring your sacks and bags with you,
 They'll be filled up by a slave of mine.
 On the other hand, be warned
 Not to come too near my door:
 If you do, you'll find yourself
 Bitten by my vicious dog!

[Enter, from the Akropolis, ATHENIANS, inebriated from their peace-celebrations and carrying torches.]

ATHENIAN^A [to door-keeper]. Just open the door! You shouldn't
 be in the way.

[To SLAVES] Get up, you lot! Don't tell me I need to singe
Your hair with my torch? [to audience] A vulgar old routine:
I couldn't stoop to that.* Oh, if we must,
We'll bring ourselves to gratify your tastes. 1220

[He starts to threaten the SLAVES with his torch.]

ATHENIAN^B [entering]. And we'll join in, though sharing your
distaste.

[To SLAVES] Clear off! Or else you'll find your hair on fire!

ATHENIAN^A. Clear off! We want the delegates from Sparta
To leave the celebration undisturbed.

ATHENIAN^B. My eyes have never seen a finer banquet.

The Spartans were such sparkling company,
While we are at our best when drinking wine.

ATHENIAN^A. Quite right. It doesn't suit us being sober.

If I can get the Athenians to agree,
All envoys will negotiate when drunk.* 1230

At present, when we make a trip to Sparta,
We're sober—so we're bent on causing trouble.

We take no notice of their actual words,
But keep detecting what they leave unsaid,
And can't agree on what has taken place.

Today, though, all was perfect harmony.
If someone got the drinking-songs mixed up,
We just applauded, swore that nothing was wrong.
But, look, these slaves are coming back again.

Clear out of here, before you get a whipping! 1240

ATHENIAN^B. Yes, just in time—the Spartans are coming out.

[Enter Spartan delegation from the Akropolis.]

SPARTAN [to piper]. Come, take your blowers up, my merry
friend.*

I'd like to dance a Spartan jig and sing
A song for our Athenian hosts and us.

ATHENIAN^A. Yes, take your puff-pipes, do; you really must.
I always love to watch you Spartans dancing.

[Space is cleared for the SPARTAN to sing and dance.]

SPARTAN.

Send down, o goddess Memory, to your singer young
The Muse, your daughter,
Who remembers glorious deeds of both our peoples. 1250

Draw up the dance! Draw in the Graces.
 Invoke, first, Artemis!
 Invoke her brother-twin,
 Who leads the dance and brings us joy!
 Invoke mount Nysa's god,*
 Who revels with his maenads,
 His eyes aflame with light!
 Invoke, too, Zeus, illuminated by his fiery bolt!
 Invoke his queen and wife, fortune's bestower!
 Invoke all other gods, whose memories

Will serve as witnesses for evermore
 To the life of gentle-minded peace
 Restored for us by the Kyprian goddess. 1290

Alalai! Cry for joy!
 Lift up your legs to dance,
 To dance for victory!
 Shout out in ecstasy!

[*To SPARTAN*] Now sound your own new strain, to match
 that song.

SPARTAN [*singing and dancing*].

Leaving the lovely summit of Taygetos,
 Come Muse, O Spartan Muse, help us to call
 In fitting fashion on Apollo, god of Amyklai,*
 And on Athena, goddess of Bronze-House shrine,*
 And on the noble Tyndaridai 1300
 Who play beside Eurotas' banks.*

Come tread in time,
 Tread lightly to the dance's step.
 Let our singing honour Sparta,
 Where the love of dance is nurtured
 With the beat of stamping feet,
 And where the girls, like colts,
 Upon Eurotas' banks
 Leap in rhythm, kicking up the dust 1310
 Into the breeze,

And let their hair stream out
 Like Bacchants swirling with their wands.*
 At their head moves Leda's daughter,*
 Sacred, charming leader of the dance.

LEADER. Come, bind your hair up neatly for a further dance.
 Prepare

To move with feet like deer, and clap your hands to keep
 in time.

Let's raise a song in honour of the warlike, Bronze-House
 goddess. 1320-1

[*Exit all, dancing.*]

EXPLANATORY NOTES

The Explanatory Notes are chiefly designed to provide concise guidance to historical and other details which might puzzle a modern reader. For three of the four plays in this volume, fuller information about most points can be found in the Oxford commentaries which are cited in the Select Bibliography.

Fragments of lost tragedies are cited from the following works:

Nauck A. Nauck (ed.), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (2nd edn., Leipzig, 1889)

TrGF *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, ed. B. Snell *et al.* (Göttingen, 1971–).

Play titles are abbreviated as follows:

A.	<i>Acharnians</i>
AW	<i>Assembly-Women</i>
B.	<i>Birds</i>
C.	<i>Clouds</i>
F.	<i>Frogs</i>
K.	<i>Knights</i>
L.	<i>Lysistrata</i>
P.	<i>Peace</i>
W.	<i>Wasps</i>
We.	<i>Wealth</i>
WT	<i>Women at the Thesmophoria</i>

 LYSISTRATA

- 1–3 *Now, if . . . tambourines*: Lysistrata implies that women are irrepressible devotees of ecstatic/sensual cults; ‘Bacchic’ refers to worship of Dionysos (see Index of Names). For tambourines, or small drums, cf. 388 and W. 119.
- 8 *arching eyebrows*: there may be a clue here to the appearance of Lysistrata’s mask; see n. 9 to my Introduction to the play.
- 12 *And so we are*: Kalonike, typically as it turns out, seems to endorse (male/comic) stereotypes of female weakness.
- 16 *hard for women*: the respectable norm for Athenian women—though variously qualified in practice—was a life spent predominantly in the house; certain religious festivals (cf. 1–3) were a salient exception.
- 36 *eels*: Boiotian eels, from Lake Kopais, were a well-known delicacy; cf. 702, and e.g. A. 880 ff. The war made them harder to obtain.
- 42 ‘*What . . . achieve?*’: the line is in tragic style, though probably not a quotation.

- 59–60 *Salamis . . . ride*: sailors from Salamis (see Index of Names), and here by extension their wives, acquired a popular/comic reputation for sexual lustiness; Greek terms for sailing, riding, driving, etc., are often used for sexual innuendo: cf. ?411, *AW* 37–9, and e.g. *W.* 501.
- 62 *Acharnai*: the largest of Athenian demes (see note on *B.* 645); situated north of the city, it was especially vulnerable to Spartan ravages of Attika, including those from Dekeleia (see Introduction to the play): Lysistrata expects the women of this district to be eager for peace. Cf. Aristophanes' own *Acharnians*.
- 64 *a drink*: an instance of the comic leitmotif of women's bibulousness; cf. 114, 195 ff., 395, 465–6, *AW* 14–15, 132, *We.* 645, 737, 972.
- 67–8 *Anagyrous . . . stink*: Anagyrous, in south-west Attika, was noted for a fetid plant which grew in its swamps; this gave rise to expressions roughly equivalent in type to 'raise a stink'.
- 79 *ravishing*: Lampito matches the Athenian notion of Spartan women as athletic; cf. e.g. Xenophon, *Constitution of Sparta* I 4, Euripides, *Andromache* 595–600.
- 81 *By the Twins*: a characteristic Spartan oath by Kastor (see Index of Names) and his brother; cf. 86, 90, 142, 983, 1095, etc.
- 89 *trimmed*: Greek women often depilated or trimmed their pubic hair, either by plucking (as here, cf. 151) or singeing (n. on 828); comedy implies that the practice was meant to please male preferences for visible, youthful pudenda (cf. *F.* 516).
- 91 *'choice piece'*: although the Korinthian is a wife, the humour probably plays on Korinth's reputation for producing courtesans and prostitutes (cf. *We.* 149).
- 103 *Eukrates*: a typically Aristophanic 'sting-in-the-tail' joke; the name of Eukrates, apparently a military commander (though not identifiable for certain), is substituted for that of a Thracian place name.
- 110 *synthetic relief*: Miletos (see Index of Names) had a name, in comedy at least, as a producer of dildoes; cf. 158, *AW* 916.
- 112 *By the two goddesses*: Demeter and her daughter Persephone; for this characteristically female oath, cf. *AW* 155.
- 127 *'What means . . . flow?'*: a line in quasi-tragic style.
- 139 *sex and intrigue*: the Greek expression, lit. 'Poseidon and a skiff', alludes to the story (treated by Sophokles in his *Tyros*) of Poseidon's seduction of Tyro and the exposure of twin babies in a skiff. Lysistrata refers more generally to tragedies about heroines such as Phaidra; see the charges against Euripides at *F.* 1043–51.
- 151 *triangles of hair*: see n. on 89.
- 155–6 *Menelaos . . . sword*: the story, concerning Menelaos' inability to kill his wife after the capture of Troy, is found at Euripides, *Andromache* 629–32.

- 158 *try self-abuse*: the Greek phrase, lit. ‘flay a flayed dog’, probably refers to the use of leather dildoes (cf. 109). We do not know whether this Pherekrates is the comic poet of that name, active c.440–420.
- 163 *forcing us*: cf. a husband’s sentiment at *AW* 471.
- 169 *duplicitous guile*: Lampito inadvertently confirms the Athenian image of Spartans as inveterately perfidious; cf. 629, 1270, *A.* 307–8, *P.* 1063–8.
- 170–1 *And who . . . negotiations?*: Lampito’s loaded question reflects a situation in which popular support for peace in Athens was probably low.
- 173–4 *triremes . . . funds*: ships and money. Triremes (cf. *B.* 108) were fitted with sails as well as oars. Athena’s treasury was in a building on the Akropolis (cf. *We.* 1192–3); about a year before this play the Athenians had decided to draw on their financial reserves and build new ships (Thucydides 8.15.1, cf. 2.24.1).
- 189 *over a shield*: a reminiscence of Aischylos, *Seven Against Thebes* 42 ff.
- 192 *white horse*: such a victim was probably more typical of Scythian sacrifice (see e.g. Herodotos 1.216.4); but there may be sexual innuendo here.
- 197 *water*: unmixed wine was not regularly drunk (though used for toasts); it is associated with decadent barbarians (e.g. *A.* 75), slaves (*K.* 85–7, *AW* 1123), revelling heroes (*A.* 1229), the vulgar (*K.* 354), and, as here, the bibulous women of comic imagination (*AW* 227).
- 203 *Persuasion*: actually a deity, often cited in erotic contexts and long associated with Aphrodite, with whom she shared a shrine on the Akropolis.
- 231 *lioness position*: lit. ‘lioness [*sc.* handle] on a cheese-grater’; the position is frequently depicted in erotic vase-paintings. For the contrast-position in the previous line, cf. *AW* 265.
- 246 *help them . . . gates*: on this change of direction, cf. my Introduction to the play.
- 270 *wife of Lykon*: Rhodia, who was the subject of sexual slurs in comedy. Lykon was a well-to-do Athenian (cf. *W.* 1301), possibly politically active, though probably not the same man as the accuser of Sokrates.
- 275 *leave unscathed*: Kleomenes, king of Sparta, had tried to stifle the nascent Athenian democracy by force in 508; he left after a two-day occupation of the Akropolis: see Herodotos 5.72, and my Introduction to the play.
- 280 *six full years*: the old men caricature the idea of Spartan hardness, for which cf. e.g. *B.* 1281–2.

- 284 *Euripides*: Euripides (see Index of Names) the ‘misogynist’—a comically distorted extrapolation from his plays—was the focus of Aristophanes’ very next play, *Women at the Thesmophoria*, produced just two months after *L.*; cf. also 368–9.
- 285 *Marathon*: the reference (see Index of Names), taken literally, would make these veterans around a century old; for archetypal ‘Marathon-fighters’ see A. 181, W. 711.
- 299 *Lemnos*: north-east Aegean island with a volcanic history; hence proverbially associated with fire and its god, Hephaistos.
- 313 *generals now in Samos*: several generals were currently with the fleet at the island of Samos in the east Aegean, and indeed conspiring to turn Athens to oligarchy: see Thucydides 8.27 ff. But the reference may express a simple cynicism on the part of old soldiers.
- 344 *Gold-crested*: a reference to the golden diadem on the archaic olive-wood statue of Athena (262).
- 347 *Tritogeneia*: an old, formal title of Athena’s (e.g. Homer, *Odyssey* 3.378); its meaning is obscure (possibly ‘true-born’).
- 360 *Boupalos*: sculptor (real or fictitious), butt of the sixth-century iambic (satirical) poet, Hipponax of Ephesos, who threatened violence against him.
- 368–9 *Euripides . . . woman*: see n. on 284.
- 380 *a juror*: the remark depends on the (comic) stereotype of jurors as typically vindictive as well as old, like the wasp-jurors of W.; cf. 624–5.
- 381 *hair on fire*: probably a traditional element of ‘pantomime’ comic violence; cf. 1217–18.
- 387 *COMMISSIONER*: one of a special board, first of ten and subsequently of thirty, set up by the Athenians in 413/412 to streamline the city’s bureaucratic and financial procedures; see Thucydides 8.1.3.
- 388–9 *tambourines . . . Adonis*: the Commissioner thinks of women, as Lysistrata herself complained at the start (1–3), as addicted to religious rites of the ecstatic, sensual variety; for Sabazios, see the Index of Names. Adonis, a Cypriot youth beloved of Aphrodite and victim of an untimely death, was the subject of a women’s vegetation cult which involved rooftop gardens. In what follows, Demostratos’ wife is imagined on a house close to the Pnyx.
- 392 *fleet to Sicily*: the Commissioner evokes (fairly fancifully) one of the Assembly meetings which preceded the great Sicilian expedition of 415; see Thucydides 6.8–32. Demostratos was a member of a notable Athenian family, but we know little of his politics.
- 394 *Zakynthos*: island close to north-west Peloponnese, an ally of Athens; for its (subsequent) contribution to the Sicilian expedition, see Thucydides 7.31.2

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- 422 *new oars*: this fits the earlier idea (173–4) that Athens is committed to using its financial reserves to rebuild a large navy.
- 435 *Artemis*: the oath by an archer-goddess is ironically apt; it starts a comically heightened sequence of women's oaths (439, 443, 447).
- 439 *Pandrosos*: a daughter of Kekrops, the legendary first king of Athens; she had a shrine on the north side of the Akropolis.
- 443 *Phosphoros*: lit. 'light-bringer', a title of Artemis or Hekate; both had enclosures near the west end of the Akropolis.
- 457–8 *market . . . wives*: comedy exploits the idea that working women of the types mentioned were typically aggressive harridans; cf. *F.* 549 ff., 857–8, *We.* 426–7. See n. on *B.* 491 for Aristophanic comic compounds.
- 495 *hold the purse strings*: cf. the same argument in Praxagora's mouth at *AW* 211–12.
- 513 *peace inscription*: a reference to the decision taken in 418 to renounce the Peace of Nikias (of 421) and renew hostilities with Sparta; cf. Thucydides 5.56.3.
- 520 '*Just leave the war to menfolk.*': a phrase found at *Iliad* 6.492 (Hektor to Andromache) and 20.137 (Poseidon to Hera); the husband's voice might be heard as that of a posturing, would-be 'hero'. For the political interests of Athenian women, see my Introduction to the play, n. 16.
- 530 *veil*: respectable women would often be veiled in public.
- 537 *hitch . . . wool*: a woman might hitch up her clothes for wool-working; cf. *AW* 93–4, with the vase-painting illustrated in J. Boardman, *Athenian Red Figure Vases: the Archaic Period* (London, 1975), pl. 293. Bean-chewing was presumably for concentration, though elsewhere it is especially associated with rustics (690, *K.* 41).
- 554 *Lysimache*: this female name, like 'Lysistrata' itself, means 'war-breaker'. Since the contemporary priestess of Athena Polias had this name, some have seen here a reference to her; but the case for this is very weak. Neither here nor in the similar passage at *P.* 992 does the point depend on anything other than the name's etymology; and we have absolutely no reason to connect the priestess to the idea of peace.
- 560 *Gorgon-shield*: a Gorgon's head was a common emblem on military shields; cf. *A.* 574, 1095, *P.* 561.
- 578 *In quest for power*: Lysistrata's language alludes to political 'clubs' and groupings, some but not all of which had oligarchic leanings (cf. Thucydides 8.54.4 for events of 411, and, more generally, Plato, *Republic* 2.365d3); but the whole passage relies on a sweep of political 'cleaning-up' which does not lend itself to close analysis. See my Introduction to the play.

- 580–2 *everyone . . . Athens*: Lysistrata’s proposal—ostensibly (though very fuzzily) for a profuse extension of Athenian citizenship—is as extravagantly unrealistic as it is sentimental.
- 597 *sits and waits*: many if not most Athenian girls were married in their teens; the chances of marrying beyond that age probably diminished sharply.
- 604 *wreath*: wreaths (cf. e.g. *We.* 592, *AW* 538) and ribbons (*AW* 1032) were standard funerary items; see n. on *AW* 1033.
- 619 *Hippias*: son of Peisistratos and tyrant of Athens 527–510; cf. 1153. His brother Hipparchos was murdered in 514 by the so-called tyrannicides (note on 632). The old men’s suspicions of tyranny (see 630–1) have a comically paranoiac tinge (cf. *W.* 487 ff.); but the idea played a real part in the Athenian political atmosphere in this period (Thucydides 6.53.3, 6.60.1, cf. 6.28.2).
- 625 *jury-pay*: a rate of two obols a day was introduced on Perikles’ proposal, and raised to three obols on Kleon’s (see *W.* 300, 525, 689–90, etc.); for Athenian currency, see n. on *B.* 18. Jury service is associated in comedy especially with the elderly, who have the leisure to give up the necessary time: see e.g. *We.* 277, 1166–7, and *W.*, *passim*. Payment for public office was something which concerned opponents of radical democracy: cf. Aristotle, *Constitution of the Athenians* 33.1, referring to events in the same year as *L.*
- 629 *wolves*: see n. on 169.
- 632 *‘wear . . . branch’*: the men quote from a famous drinking-song which celebrated the ‘tyrannicides’, Harmodios (see *AW* 682) and Aristogeiton, killers of Hipparchos in 514 (n. on 619), and expressed undying allegiance to the democratic cause.
- 641–7 *At seven . . . necklace*: a sequence of religious duties performed by Athenian girls selected from prominent families. The first refers to those (four girls, aged 7–10) involved in the weaving of the goddess’ robe for the Panathenaia, Athena’s major festival (July/August), celebrated in a particularly grand form, the Great Panathenaia, every fourth year (as pictured on the Parthenon frieze); cf. *AW* 730 ff. The second is unknown. The third evokes the ritual in which every five years girls dressed as bears to celebrate the cult of Artemis at Brauron in east Attika. For basket-carriers, see n. on *B.* 1551; for necklaces of food, cf. *We.* 765.
- 653 *Persian Wars*: the invasions of 490 (cf. 285) and 480–479 (see 1250–61), esp. the naval victory at Salamis.
- 669 *Leipsydrion*: after the murder of Hipparchos in 514, opponents of the tyrant Hippias (n. on 619) were besieged in a fort at Leipsydrion in north-west Attika (Herodotos 5.62); the men therefore are singing once more (cf. 630–3) as allies of the tyrannicides, and their fictional

- age has grown even greater (cf. n. on 285)! The point of ‘white-footed’ is not certain.
- 675 *Artemisia*: queen of Karia, who accompanied Xerxes on the Persian invasion of Greece in 480 which culminated in the sea battle of Salamis; see Herodotos 7.99, 8.68 ff.
- 678 *Amazons*: mythical Asiatic female warriors, noted for horseback archery; a common subject in Greek art, including more than one depiction by Mikon (fifth-century Athenian painter/sculptor) of their attack on Athens in the time of Theseus.
- 695 *Aesop’s beetle*: the beetle, wronged by the eagle, pestered Zeus and made him knock the bird’s eggs from his lap—moral: even Zeus cannot protect wrongdoers. Cf. *P.* 129–30.
- 697 *girl from Thebes*: the Boiotian of 85 ff.; ‘Ismenia’ is a token Theban name (cf. *A.* 691).
- 702 *eel*: see n. on 36.
- 722 *pulley*: building work was still in progress on the Akropolis.
- 751 *Athena’s helmet*: from one of the goddess’ statues on the Akropolis.
- 757 *family party*: an occasion, a few days after birth, when infants were carried round the hearth in the presence of relatives and friends.
- 759 *guardian snake*: religious legend told of a snake which guarded the Akropolis (see Herodotos 8.41.2).
- 760 *owls*: Athena’s bird (*B.* 516), though no doubt there were plenty anyhow on the Akropolis.
- 770–1 *swallows . . . hoopoes*: the conjunction suggests the myth of Tereus and Prokne (see Index of Names).
- 785 *Melanion*: sometimes associated with the female hunter Atalanta, but here a solitary misogynist.
- 799 *lift your legs*: cf. 229 for the sexual allusion.
- 800 *pubic region*: comedy’s phallic costume needs to be kept in mind here; see the general Introduction, ‘Stage Directions’.
- 804 *Phormio*: a successful Athenian general and naval commander from the 440s and 430s; cf. *K.* 562, *P.* 348.
- 814 *And lived on mountain slopes*: these words are a conjectural supplement to the Greek text.
- 828 *use a lamp*: Greek women sometimes reduced and shaped their pubic hair by singeing; cf. *AW* 13, *WT* 238 ff., with n. on 89 above.
- 835 *Chloe*: a title of Demeter’s (see Index of Names).
- 846 *the wheel*: such torture was used to extract legal evidence from slaves; cf. n. on *We.* 875–6.
- 852 *Paionidai*: in north-west Attika; it is chosen here for a pun on a Greek verb equivalent to the English use of ‘bang’ as sexual slang. The name Kinesias itself, though not uncommon (see Index of

- Names for one real bearer), also carries overtones here of the verb *kinein*, to ‘screw’.
- 856 *apple or an egg*: the Greeks made toasts with food as well as drink; apples, at least, also have erotic associations.
- 904 *lie down*: Kinesias’ eagerness may have reminded Aristophanes’ audience, somewhat ironically, of Zeus’ impatient desire for Hera at *Iliad* 14.292 ff.
- 908 *Manes*: a common slave-name at Athens; cf. note on B. 1311.
- 944 *Rhodian scent*: if there is a special point to perfume from Rhodes, we cannot say what it is.
- 957 *Foxy*: lit. ‘dog-fox’, the nickname of a certain Philostratos, a pimp, real or alleged; cf. K. 1067–9.
- 980 *HERALD*: as bearers of official messages, heralds traditionally enjoyed privileged immunity from interference; they were sometimes the only channel of communication between states during war.
- 980 *Elders*: displaying ignorance of Athenian democracy, the Spartan uses a term, *Gerousia*, which in his own city referred to a council of thirty elders, including the two kings.
- 982 *or priapic god*: for this type of comic alternative, see e.g. B. 102.
- 991 *message-stick*: see n. on B. 1283.
- 1004 *bushy plants*: lit. ‘myrtle’, a euphemism for female genitalia; myrtles were sacred to Aphrodite.
- 1021 *before*: see 663.
- 1048 *present troubles*: too vague a remark to be a sure allusion to the events which led to an oligarchic *coup* in Athens just a few weeks after the performance. But these were tense days in the city, and the chorus’ avoidance of the customary personal satire, of which *Lysistrata* generally has little, may reflect the nervous mood. Cf. my Introduction to the play.
- 1054 *If . . . the war is over*: for an instant the chorus sings with reference to the real world (where hopes of peace are low) not to the plot’s comic fantasy; there is a comparable point at A. 651.
- 1072 *hairy faces*: see n. on B. 1282.
- 1094 *herm-defacers*: a reference to the scandalous defacement of the city’s herms (icons, often phallic, of Hermes) on the eve of the Sicilian expedition in 415; see Thucydides 6.27–9, 60–1.
- 1114 *Reconciliation*: the same personification is mentioned at A. 989; cf. the two female Truces at K. 1389 ff.
- 1124 ‘A woman . . . wits.’: a quotation from Euripides’ (lost) *Melanippe the Wise* (fr. 483, Nauck); parts of the following two lines may also contain tragic borrowings.
- 1131 *Olympia . . . Delphi*: Lysistrata appeals to a religiously based sense of Greek unity which finds expression at shared shrines/festivals (see

- Index of Names). Cf. the reference to this aspect of Greek ‘nation-hood’ at Herodotos 8.144.
- 1133 *barbarian armies*: a vexed line, but the underlying point is certainly that Greeks should unite against the traditional enemy, Persia; there is an allusion to Spartan and/or Athenian use of Persian funding during the war (cf. esp. Thucydides 8.4, 45–8).
- 1135 ‘*That . . . complete.*’: a line from Euripides’ (lost) *Erechtheus* (fr. 363, Nauck).
- 1139–44 *Perikleidas . . . territory*: Perikleidas is not named elsewhere; for the historical context in 463/462, when Messene (in south-west Peloponnese) rose up against Spartan rule, see my Introduction to the play: Lysistrata’s claim that Kimon saved Sparta is a fundamental distortion of events.
- 1146 *ravage*: a reference to the Spartan fort at Dekeleia in north Attika; see my Introduction to the play.
- 1150–53 *Spartans . . . Hippias*: the Spartans played a crucial role in ejecting Hippias (n. on 619) from Athens in 510 (Herodotos 5.64–5, Thucydides 6.54–9); Lysistrata omits to mention (but how could the audience forget it? cf. 271–81) that they had earlier lent support to the tyranny. Hippias employed Thessalian cavalry to shore up his regime.
- 1156 *cloak of freedom*: cf. the similar motif at 586.
- 1169–70 *Echinous . . . Megara*: Echinous, in Thessaly and close to the Malian gulf, belonged to a region recently oppressed by the Spartans (Thucydides 8.3); the name conveys an allusion to Reconciliation’s pubic region. Megara had long been a bone of contention between Athens and Sparta; ‘legs’ refers to the long walls which connected the city to the settlement of Nisaia (held by Athens).
- 1184 *baskets*: the Greek probably involves a piece of sexual innuendo.
- 1194 *basket-carrier*: see 646, with n. on B. 1551.
- 1202 *nothing left*: as with the earlier song, at 1043–71, the humour is deliberately bathetic, a kind of puerile frivolity; but there may here also be a glance at the theme of hypocrisy in social relations (cf. e.g. AW 746 ff. for its development).
- 1219 *stoop*: cf. 381 with n.
- 1230 *drunk*: cf. the praise of unmixed wine at K. 85–100.
- 1242 *blowers*: normally taken to be bagpipes carried by a musician accompanying the Spartans; but though the ancient world did know some bagpipe-type instruments, the reference may simply be to the theatrical piper and his instruments (cf. n. on B. 861).
- 1253 *won the day*: the Athenians supplied many of the ships for the Greek naval encounter with the Persians near Artemision (promontory on north Euboea) in 480; see Herodotos 7.175 ff.

- 1254–6 *Leonidas . . . tusks*: Leonidas, Spartan king, was commander of the Spartan ‘three hundred’ who resisted the Persians heroically at Thermopylai (see Index of Names) in 480; see Herodotos 7.204 ff., 219 ff.
- 1270 *wily foxes*: see n. on 169.
- 1274 *these women*: no Spartan wives were previously mentioned as in the Akropolis, only the female ‘hostages’ from Sparta’s allies left by Lampito at 244. But this is surely a further instance of Aristophanic insouciance about factual consistency.
- 1283 *Nysa’s god*: Dionysos (see Index of Names); the location of Nysa (cf. *F.* 215), associated with the god’s birth, was not agreed.
- 1298 *Amyklai*: a township close to Sparta; site of a major sanctuary of Apollo.
- 1299 *Bronze-House shrine*: ‘Bronze-House goddess’ was Athena’s cult-title at Sparta; cf. 1321.
- 1300–1 *Tyndaridai . . . Eurotas*: the Tyndaridai are Kastor (see Index of Names) and Polydeukes; Sparta lay on the west bank of the River Eurotas.
- 1313 *Bacchants*: ecstatic female devotees of the god Dionysos.
- 1314 *Leda’s daughter*: Helen, who had the status of a goddess in Sparta.

ASSEMBLY-WOMEN

- 3 *like a god’s*: Greek prayers/hymns often cited the birth of a deity, and important events in its life. Praxagora’s lamp is partly a humble surrogate for the Sun-god himself, partly an accomplice to conspiracy.
- 13 *singe*: on female depilation, see n. at *L.* 89.
- 16 *blab*: Praxagora speaks as though accepting the (comic) stereotype of women as secret and compulsive consumers of food and drink; cf. 44–5, 132, 154–7, 226–7 below, with n. on *L.* 64.
- 22 *Phyromachos*: unidentifiable (though he may have been a minor politician or an actor), and no convincing explanation of the passage has yet been proposed.
- 31 *herald’s voice*: announcing the imminent Assembly meeting; cf. the herald’s role at *A.* 43 ff.
- 46 *thingummy’s wife*: here, as also at 41–3, 49, 51, I have omitted proper names which are in the Greek; although these might conceivably be those of real Athenians, they are probably fictional, and in any case it is the gossipy flavour that matters.
- 64 *get a tan*: because both social practice and (consequent) aesthetic taste made Athenian women typically paler than men, the wives have deliberately spent longer than usual in the sun: see nn. on 699, 878.

INDEX OF NAMES

Listed here are those proper names (excluding the purely fictional) of people, places, and institutions which are not explained in the Explanatory Notes. References are selective. An acute accent over a vowel or diphthong is used to mark the appropriate syllable for the main stress in English pronunciation. Capitals within entries indicate cross references. Play titles are abbreviated as in the Explanatory Notes.

AESOP, early sixth-century slave from Samos, author of animal fables already popular in Ar.'s time (B. 471, 651, L. 695)

AGAMEMNON, king of Mycenae, brother of MENELAOS, joint leader of Greeks in Trojan War (B. 509)

ÁGORA, civic centre of Athens (as of other Greek cities: see B. 1006), containing courts, other official buildings (We. 874–6), temples, statues of heroes (AW 682), noticeboards (B. 450), and shops (L. 557–8, AW 819)

AGÝRRHIOS, popular early fourth-century Athenian politician, responsible for introducing (at one obol), and later increasing to three obols, payment for attendance at ASSEMBLY (AW 183–8, with Aristotle, *Athenaion Politeia* 41.3); mocked for passive homosexuality (AW 102, 176)

AKRÓPOLIS limestone ‘citadel’, the original location of settlement at Athens, and in the classical period its major religious centre, particularly sacred to ATHENA (L. 241), site of Parthenon and other temples (L. 176 ff., 482–3, etc.) as well as the state treasury (L. 174, 488)

AMMON, god (sometimes identified with ZEUS) of Egyptian Thebes, possessor of an important oracular shrine at Siwah in the Libyan desert (B. 619, 716)

APHRODITE, goddess of sexuality (L. 832, AW 8), born from the sea foam near KYPROS; daughter of ZEUS, often linked with EROS (L. 551, AW 966–7); oaths by her were a feature of women’s speech (AW 189)

APOLLO, son of Leto, brother of ARTEMIS, born on Delos (B. 869); god of music/song (L. 1281, B. 217, 772) and prophecy (B. 716, 722), with major oracle at DELPHI; associated with both sending and curing/warding off disease (B. 584); sometimes titled PHOIBOS

ARISTYLLOS, otherwise unknown citizen alleged to be coprophiliac at AW 647–8, We. 314

ARTEMIS, virgin-goddess of hunting and wild animals (L. 435, 1262), daughter of ZEUS and Leto, twin-sister of APOLLO (L. 1280–1)

ASKLEPIOS, god of healing; visitors to his shrines, at Athens (one near the Peiraieus, one on south slope of the AKRÓPOLIS) and elsewhere (above all, at Epidauros in north-east Peloponnese), slept in the sanctuary overnight

in hope of cure (*We.* 659 ff., cf. *W.* 123), which might sometimes involve the god's sacred snakes

ASSEMBLY (*ekklesia*), sovereign popular institution of Athenian democracy, whose meetings, held roughly every ten days on the PNYX, were open in principle to all citizens (cf. 376 ff.); voting-forum, after public debate (*L.* 390 ff., *AW* 116 ff., 397 ff.), for state decrees (*L.* 513 ff., *AW* 813 ff.); from around 400 payment was made for attendance (n. on *AW* 188)

ATHENA, daughter of ZEUS, worshipped as Athena Polias (*B.* 828), patron-goddess of Athens, on the AKRÓPOLIS, where she had an ancient olive-wood statue (*L.* 262); various images, including Phidias' statue in the Parthenon, showed her in a warrior's helmet (*L.* 751 ff.); traditionally associated with craftsmen, including potters (*B.* 358); often depicted with an owl (*B.* 516)

ATTIKA (adj. Attic, *B.* 1704), geographical region of the Athenian polis, comprising both the city proper and the territory of the demes (*L.* 56)

BOIOTIA, region of south-central Greece, bordering ATTIKA to the north-west, including the city of Thebes (*L.* 697); notable for its plains (*L.* 88) and for the culinary delicacy of eels (*L.* 36, 702)

CHAIREPHON, associate of SOKRATES, nicknamed 'the bat' for his supposedly ghostly pallor (*B.* 1296, 1564); cf. *C.* 104, 144 ff., etc., *W.* 1408 ff

CHAOS, mythological entity (*B.* 691–3), representing a primordial vacuum before the emergence of EARTH, HEAVEN, etc.

CHARON, ferryman of souls on the river Styx in Hades (*L.* 606, *We.* 278; cf. *F.* 180 ff.)

CHIOS (adj. Chian), Greek island in east Aegean, member of Athenian empire (cf. *B.* 879–80); noted for its wines (*AW* 1139)

COUNCIL (*boulê*), of 500, drawn from the ten tribes of ATTIKA, responsible for day-to-day administration of the democracy (*L.* 1011, *We.* 949), including preparation of business for the ASSEMBLY; the PRÝTANEIS were its standing committee; Council members had special seats in the theatre (*B.* 794)

DELPHI, site of APOLLO's shrine in south central Greece, the most important oracle in the Greek world (*B.* 618, 716, *We.* 32 ff.)

DEMETER, daughter of ZEUS, a corn-goddess (*B.* 580, *We.* 515, 555) whose cults included the Greater Mysteries (*We.* 845) and the THESMOPHÓRIA; under the title of Chloe, 'green' goddess of new crops, she had a shrine near the west end of the AKRÓPOLIS (*L.* 835)

DIETREPHEIS, a cavalry officer satirized as a parvenu and for a family business involving wicker jars (*B.* 798, 1442); in fact known to have belonged to a well-established Athenian family; cf. Thucydides 7.29, 8.64 for his military activity in 413–411

- DIONYSOS, son of ZEUS and Semele (B. 558); god of wine, ecstasy, etc., enjoyed by his Bacchic/Bacchant followers (L. 1, 1284, 1312); associated with Mount Nysa (L. 1282)
- DODÓNA, oracle of ZEUS in north-west Greece (B. 716), long established (Homer, *Iliad* 16.233–4)
- EARTH (*Gê*), primordial mythological wife of HEAVEN and mother of various beings (B. 470, 694 ff.)
- EILEITHÝA, goddess of childbirth (AW 369, L. 742)
- ÉREBOS, primordial realm of darkness, associated with CHAOS and NIGHT (B. 691–4, 1193)
- EROS, winged deity and symbol of sexual desire, sometimes (see L. 551) associated with, though not yet standardly counted as the son of, APHRODITE, but also regarded as a primeval cosmic force (B. 696 ff.)
- EURIPIDES, major Athenian tragedian (c.480–406), source of paratragic material (L. 1124, *We.* 601), sometimes comically depicted as a misogynist (L. 283, 368–9); the Euripides of AW 825–9 is different
- EXEKÉSTIDES, figure of supposedly dubious rights to Athenian citizenship, probably of topical note at the time of *Birds* (B. 11, 764, 1527)
- GRACES, a trio of divine females, personifications of beauty, charm, etc., generally associated with amatory or sensual imagery (B. 1100, 1320, AW 973), and often linked with the MUSES and the attractions of music/dance (B. 782, L. 1279)
- HEAVEN, Ouranos, primeval region of the cosmos, mythological husband of EARTH (B. 694–701)
- HÉKATE, goddess of (often) dark significance, linked esp. with the Underworld and magic; she received monthly offerings at crossroads (*We.* 594–7); oaths by her are typically female (but cf. *We.* 1070); and her worship may have appealed to women (L. 700)
- HELEN, daughter of ZEUS and Leda (L. 1314), wife of MENELAOS (L. 155); her seduction by Paris (B. 1104) caused the Trojan War
- HERA, sister/wife of ZEUS (B. 1633, 1731 ff.), goddess of marriage, etc.
- HERAKLES, son of ZEUS and Alkmene (B. 558, cf. 1652), accomplisher of heroic labours; subject of apotheosis; but also a notorious glutton in comedy (B. 567, 1583 ff., L. 928); his family, persecuted by the tyrant Eurystheus, took refuge in Athens (*We.* 385, cf. Euripides, *Herakleidae*)
- HERMES, messenger of the gods, and god of merchandise, theft, etc. (*We.* 1099 ff.); capable of flight (B. 572), normally because of winged sandals
- HOMER, supreme epic poet, c.700 BC, creator of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*
- HYMEN, not so much god of marriage as quasi-divine personification of the wedding-hymn itself (B. 1736 ff., cf. *P.* 1332 ff.)

- IONIA (adj. Ionian), eastern region of Aegean, now West Turkey; commonly associated (because of near-eastern influence) with ideas of luxury and decadence (AW 883, 918)
- IRIS, goddess of the rainbow and winged messenger of the gods (B. 575, 1202 ff.)
- KALLIAS, a member of one of the richest and most aristocratic of Athenian families, reputed for his patronage of intellectuals (cf. e.g. Plato's *Protagoras*, set in his house); he is ridiculed in comedy for a profligate, sexually scandalous life style (B. 284–6, cf. F. 428–30) which led to eventual financial difficulties (AW 810)
- KARIA (adj. -ian), south-west region of Asia Minor, a source of Greek slaves (B. 764); its native peoples traditionally lived in hill-top villages (B. 292–3, where a pun on helmet-crests, which Karians were supposed to have invented, may be involved)
- KARÝSTOS (adj. Karystian), town in south Euboia, an ally of Athens (L. 1058); its men may have been popularly thought of as highly sexed (L. 1181)
- KASTOR, with his brother Polydeukes (Pollux) one of the twin Dioskouroi (AW 1069), sons of ZEUS and Leda, brothers of HELEN; also called Tyndaridai (L. 1301), sons of Tyndareus (their supposed human father); subject of a typically Spartan oath (L. 206, 988)
- KINÉSIAS, contemporary lyric poet and chorus-trainer, particularly associated with dithyramb (B. 1385 n.); also known to have been politically active; mocked for gawkinsness (B. 1378–9), and for allegedly loose bowels (AW 330, cf. F. 366); not to be identified with the fictional husband of this name in L.
- KLEISTHENES, an Athenian, possibly of some political prominence, repeatedly satirized as a passive homosexual (B. 831, L. 621, 1092, cf. A. 118, WT 574 ff.)
- KLEÓNÝMOS, Athenian politician, probably an associate of Kleon's in the 420s (cf. W. 592); mocked for gluttony/obesity (B. 289, 1477, cf. K. 1293), malicious, informer-type use of the courts (B. 1479), and alleged cowardice in battle (B. 290, 1477–81, cf. C. 353)
- KLEPSÝDRA, a spring and fountain house at the north-west corner of the AKRÓPOLIS (L. 913, n. on B. 1695)
- KORINTH, major city at west end of isthmus between central Greece and the Peloponnese; traditional enemy of Athens, though intermittently an ally in early 4th cent. (AW 199); noted for mercenaries (We. 173) and prostitutes (We. 149)
- KORYBANTICS, priests/worshippers of the goddess Kýbele (see B. 876), noted for their ecstatic rituals and trance-like states (L. 558, cf. AW 1069)
- KYPROS (adj. Kyprian) [Cyprus], island noted for the birth of APHRODITE and for the goddess' shrine at Paphos (L. 833)

KYRÉNE, Greek colony in north Africa, famous for its silphium (see n. on *B.* 534), whose export was a source of its wealth (*We.* 925)

KYTHÉRA, island off south Peloponnese, site of a sanctuary of APHRODITE (*L.* 833)

LAMPON, Athenian religious expert on oracles and related matters; a target for popular cynicism about the integrity of such people (*B.* 521, cf. 988)

LESBOS (adj. Lesbian), Greek island in north-east Aegean; often used as byword for sexual licence (*AW* 920, cf. *W.* 1346, *F.* 1308), but not usually for ‘Lesbian’ activities in the modern sense

LYSÍKRATES, the target of a gibe of financial corruption at *B.* 513; possibly the same person mocked for an ugly nose (*AW* 630) and use of hair-dye (*AW* 736)

MARATHON, region of north ATTIKA, noted for its plain (*B.* 247), site of major Greek victory over PERSIANS in 490 (*L.* 285)

MELOS (adj. Melian), Greek island in south-west Aegean, besieged into submission by Athens in 416 (*B.* 186, see Thucydides 5.84 ff.); home of Diagoras (*B.* 1072)

MENELAOS, king of SPARTA, brother of AGAMEMNON, husband of HELEN

METON, Athenian astronomer and intellectual (*B.* 992 ff.), famous for the calendaric harmonizing of lunar and solar cycles (‘the Metonic cycle’, covering 235 lunar months)

MILETOS (adj. Milesian), major Greek city in Asia Minor, an ally of Athens until its revolt in 412 (*L.* 108, cf. Thucydides 8.17); reputed for its fine wool (*L.* 729) as well as more *recherché* products (cf. *L.* 108–10)

MUSES, daughters of ZEUS and Memory (*L.* 1248), nine goddesses of memory and poetic inspiration (*B.* 781, 924, *AW* 882)

MYRONIDES, successful Athenian general during period of the city’s military expansionism in the mid-fifth century (*L.* 801, *AW* 304)

NEOKLEIDES, Athenian politician active in the 390s and 380s; accused of corruption (*We.* 666, 725); mocked for supposedly defective vision (*AW* 254, 398 ff., *We.* 665, 716 ff., 747)

NIGHT, primeval cosmic entity, mother of EROS at *B.* 693–6

NIKE, ‘Victory’, a (usually) winged goddess (*B.* 574), symbolic of success in war, athletics, etc., and sometimes associated with ATHENA (probably *L.* 317), who as Athena Nike had a small temple to the right of the Propylaia on the AKRÓPOLIS

NIKIAS, Athenian general, one of the leaders of the Sicilian expedition in 415–413 (*B.* 363), his reluctance for which (cf. Thucydides 6.8.4) encouraged a reputation for hesitation (*B.* 639); *AW* 428 may refer to his nephew

- OCEAN, a primordial part of the cosmogonical scene (B. 701); in traditional Greek mythology, Ocean circled the entire world
- ODYSSEUS, king of Ithaca, hero of the Trojan War and subsequent adventures involving Circe (We. 302 ff.), Cyclops (We. 290 ff.), a vision of the Underworld (B. 1561), all related in the *Odyssey*
- OLYMPIA, city in north-west Peloponnese, location of the main sanctuary of ZEUS in Greece (L. 1131), and site of the OLYMPICS
- OLYMPICS, pan-Hellenic religious festival of athletics, etc. (B. 1121, We. 583 ff.), held every four years, from 776 onwards, at OLYMPIA
- OLYMPUS, mountain in Thessaly, traditional abode of ZEUS and the other 'Olympian' gods (B. 781, 1231, 1731)
- PAMPHILOS, 1, Athenian general, the target of a gibe about financial corruption (We. 174-5; cf. next entry)
- PAMPHILOS, 2, fourth-century painter (see Pliny, *Natural History* 35.76), whose works included a supplication scene of the family of HERAKLES (We. 385, though some take this line to refer colourfully to PAMPHILOS 1 pleading with his family for mercy in court)
- PAN, god of the wilds (B. 745), often depicted with goat features; capable of causing sudden disease (L. 998); grottoes, including one on the north-west slope of the AKRÓPOLIS, were sacred to him (L. 2, 721, 911, cf. Euripides, *Ion* 492 ff.)
- PEISANDROS, Athenian politician active from early 420s, subject to gibes regarding supposed military cowardice (cf. B. 1556) and profiteering from war (L. 490); he emerged in 411 as leader of the oligarchic coup at Athens (Thucydides 8.49 ff.)
- PERSIANS, major near-eastern power (B. 483-7), who unsuccessfully invaded Greece in 490 and 480-79 (L. 653, 1250-61), but were later wooed by both sides in the Peloponnesian War (cf. B. 1028, L. 1133 with note); a byword for wealth (We. 170)
- PHÍLOKLES, Athenian tragedian, author of a tetralogy of plays on the story of TEREUS (B. 281), and compared, perhaps for physical reasons, to a lark (B. 1295); cf. W. 462, WT 168
- PHILÓKRATES, an Athenian bird-seller (B. 14, 1077), presumably a well-known trader in the AGORA
- PHOIBOS, lit. 'radiant', traditional title of APOLLO (B. 217, 716, We. 39, 213)
- PHRYGIANS, an Anatolian people concentrated to the south-west of the Black Sea; source of such imported deities as SABAZIOS; producers of fine wool (B. 493)
- PNYX, Athenian hill west of the AKRÓPOLIS, meeting-place of the ASSEMBLY (AW 243, 281-3)
- POSEIDON, brother of ZEUS (B. 1659) and therefore a 'senior' OLYMPIAN (B. 1565 ff.); god of the sea (L. 403, We. 396-7) and earthquakes (L. 1142)

- PROKNE, Athenian princess, wife of TEREUS, mother of Itys (B. 212), metamorphosed into a nightingale (B. 203 ff., 665 ff.)
- PROMETHEUS, a Titan (see n. on B. 469) who betrayed ZEUS and befriended men (B. 1545) by giving fire to the latter
- PRÝTANEIS, standing committee of the COUNCIL, responsible for presiding at its meetings and at those of the ASSEMBLY; each Athenian tribe's fifty representatives served for a prytany (a tenth of the year)
- PYLOS, in south-west Peloponnese, was captured by Athens in 425 (see K. 55 etc.) and held as a military base until 410 (L. 104, 1163)
- SABAZIOS, a PHRYGIAN god (B. 875) whose cult, involving ecstatic rituals (L. 388) and perhaps trance-like states (W. 9–10), had been introduced into Athens
- SALAMIS (adj. Salaminian), island off west coast of ATTIKA and belonging to Athens; a traditional source of Athenian sailors/rowers, hence the butt of sexually suggestive jokes (AW 37–8, L. 59–60, cf. L. 411)
- SCYTHIANS, nomadic peoples north of the Black Sea (B. 941); source of Greek slaves (L. 184, 433 ff.)
- SKIRA, an Athenian festival, in early summer, exclusively for women (AW 18, 59, cf. WT 834)
- SOKRATES, Athenian philosopher (469–399), reputedly neglectful of bodily hygiene (B. 1282), and notable for a special, semi-mystical concern with the soul (cf. B. 1553 ff.); mentor of CHAIREPHON; central butt of Aristophanes' *Clouds*
- SPARTA, leading city of Peloponnese and head of military league at war with the Athenian empire 431–404 (see esp. L., *passim*); hence Athens's *bête noire* (B. 814–16) and supposedly perfidious (L. 169, 629); notorious for periodic 'expulsions of foreigners' (B. 1013, cf. Thucydides 1.144.2), and reputed for cultivation of physical toughness (n. on B. 1281–3); its people were sometimes called Lakedaimonians (B. 813)
- TARTAROS, a primordial realm of darkness (B. 693–8), traditionally treated as part of the Underworld
- TAÝGETOS, mountain overlooking SPARTA from the south-west (L. 117, 1297)
- TÉLEAS, a rich Athenian, active as a political official around the time of *Birds*, where he is mentioned as the proposer of an ASSEMBLY decree (B. 1025); cf. B. 168, P. 1008
- TEREUS, mythological king of THRACE, husband of PROKNE, who killed their son Itys in revenge for Tereus' rape of her sister Philomela; metamorphosed into a hoopoe (B. 92 ff. and *passim*)
- THASOS (adj. Thasian), north Aegean island, producer of one of the finer, more aromatic wines of the Greek world (L. 196 ff., AW 1119, We. 1021)

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- THEÓGENES, name of an Athenian mocked as a braggart at *B.* 822, 1127, and a ‘goose-fox’ (noisy trickster?) at *B.* 1295; also mentioned (but not certainly the same person) at *L.* 63; the name was common, and further identification is hazardous
- THERMÓPYLAI, mountain pass, focus of SPARTAN resistance to the PERSIANS’ invasion in 480 (*L.* 1254–61), and site for meetings of a league of central Greek states (*L.* 1131)
- THESMOPHÓRIA, Athenian festival, held in autumn in honour of DEMETER and Persephone, exclusively for women (*AW* 223, 443), and including a day of fasting (*B.* 1519); the setting for Aristophanes’ *Women at the Thesmophoria*
- THRACE, region beyond north Aegean coast, the site of fighting at various points during the Peloponnesian War (cf. *B.* 1369, *L.* 103); the territory’s non-Greek tribes sometimes supplied light-armed mercenaries to Athens (*L.* 563, cf. *A.* 134 ff.)
- THRASYBOÚLOS, democratic Athenian politician, whose credentials were established in later years of the Peloponnesian War, and who remained prominent till his death in 388 (*AW* 203, 356, *We.* 550)
- TIMON, proverbial (probably legendary) recluse (*B.* 1549, *L.* 809)
- TWINS, another term, especially in Spartan oaths, for KASTOR and Polydeukes, the Dioskouroi (*L.* 81 with n.)
- ZEUS, king (*B.* 568) of Olympian gods, invoked more often than any other deity; husband/brother of HERA, father of APHRODITE, ATHENA, DEMETER etc.; his shrine at OLYMPIA was focus of the OLYMPICS (*We.* 583 ff.); a sky-god (*B.* 1502), wielder of thunderbolts (*B.* 570, 576, 1538, 1714–51, *L.* 773, 1285 *We.* 125); often regarded as hostile to humans (*B.* 1506, *We.* 87 ff., 1107 ff.), yet also worshipped as Zeus ‘Saviour’ (*AW* 1045, *We.* 877, 1175 ff.)